GEORGE ELIOT

Middlemarch

IN TWO VOLUMES VOLUME ONE

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VOLUME ONE

MIDDLEMARCH

By George Eliot

INTRODUCTION BY GERALD BULLETT

'George Eliot . . . wrote for the most part of a way of life over and done with; it was the society and way of life she knew in her childhood, that of midland England before the first Reform Bill . . . since it was finished it was static. It could therefore be described completely; and in the solidity and comprehensiveness with which she created her fictional world she has no peer in English except Scott.'

Galsworthy in a sense 'pickled' English middle-class society for posterity's sampling in the same way; but Walter Allen's words from his book, *The English Novel*, serve to remind one how thoroughly 'her delight in an ordered, hierarchical way of life in which everyone has his prescribed place and duties' is captured. It is probably the reason for George Eliot's rediscovery in the sixties, and the range, quality, conception and treatment of *Middlemarch* will be surely rediscovered by countless readers as a major work of English fiction.

Gerald Bullett considered *Middlemarch* the most 'fully adult novel of its time'. In its interweaving of various life-stories against a vivid background it is one of the most copious and full-blooded.

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FICTION

Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide,
In thy most need to go by thy side

GEORGE ELIOT, pseudonym of Mary Ann (or Marian) Evans, born at Arbury Farm, in the parish of Chilvers Coton, Warwickshire, November 1819. Translated Strauss (1846) and Feuerbach (1854); assistant editor of John Chapman's *Westminster Review*, 1851–3; began writing fiction in 1856; lived with George Henry Lewes from 1854 till his death in 1879; married John Walter Cross (twenty years her junior) in May 1880, and died seven months later, on 22nd December 1880.

GEORGE ELIOT

MIDDLEMARCH

IN TWO VOLUMES: VOLUME ONE

INTRODUCTION BY
GERALD BULLETT

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Vol. 1

INTRODUCTION

George Eliot is unique among nineteenth-century novelists by virtue of being not only a first-rate imaginative artist but also an acute analytical thinker. Her massive intellectuality and independent judgment had already won for her a considerable reputation as a critic and essayist when, at the age of thirty-seven, and at the prompting of her life-companion George Henry Lewes, Mary Ann (or Marian) Evans discovered herself as a novelist and decided to hide her identity under the pseudonym of 'George Eliot.' Five novels, in ten years, followed that first attempt; and then, in 1871–2, came *Middlemarch*. On 2nd December 1870 she had written in her Journal: 'I am experimenting in a story ("Miss Brooke") which I began without any very serious intention of carrying it out lengthily. It is a subject which has been recorded among my possible themes ever since I began to write fiction, but will probably take new shapes in the development.' The entry for the last day of that year tells us that the story of Miss Brooke was begun 'about the opening of November' and has reached the hundredth page. In order to write it she seems to have turned aside from the Vincy-Featherstone-Lydgate story, on which for some time she had been engaged, and to have begun the new one with no notion that the two were destined to be incorporated in one novel. It is at their point of junction, the eleventh chapter, that the intimate study of Dorothea Brooke gives place not merely to the companion-story but to the introduction of the general *Middlemarch* theme, which is the diversity of provincial manners and the significance of ordinary lives. Those first ten chapters, entitled 'Miss Brooke,' and published as the first of eight monthly parts, were immediately acclaimed a masterpiece. Such contemporary judgments are not always confirmed by posterity; but here we recognize a true verdict. In these ten chapters, which carry the story of Miss Brooke to the point of her marriage with Casaubon, George Eliot excelled herself, as never, in the same degree, again.

That she excelled herself is the exact truth; for here we have not only the authentic George Eliot, her own searching vision of character, but something that is too often (though not always) lacking in her earlier work: an ease of manner, a lightness of touch by no means inconsistent with profundity, an all but effortless mastery of her material: in a word, self-forgetfulness. Whether this new grace is the effect of her having 'no very serious intention' of writing the story lengthily, one can only conjecture; but the difference in tone, both from that of other books and from much that follows in the same book, is unmistakable. The essence of that difference is perhaps in the distance—neither too much nor too little—at which she, the creator, stands from her creatures. In her portrayal of Dorothea Brooke she sustains a nice balance between self-identifying sympathy and emotional aloofness, and to Mr Casaubon she is inflexibly just. This last constitutes something more than an artistic triumph, for there can be little doubt, I think, that the character of Casaubon owes at least something to her recollection at the age of fifty of an elderly person at whose hands she had suffered a humiliation twenty-eight years before.

In 1843 her friend Charles Hennell, whose *Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* had had a decisive influence on her mental development, married Rufa, daughter of a Dr Brabant of Devizes. 'Miss Evans,' says Charles Bray, another great friend, 'was one of the bridesmaids, and she afterwards paid a visit to Dr Brabant in order to cheer him upon the loss of his only daughter.' In this endeavour she seems to have been almost too successful. Her zeal, the zeal of an intellectual young woman eager to devote herself to the service of an elderly scholar, knew no discretion. With a man of sense this would not have mattered; but Dr Brabant at sixty-two was as foolish and self-centred as Marian at twenty-two was callow and innocently ardent. It was decided between them that she was to be his second daughter. She was given access to his library; they read, walked, and talked together; she was in ecstasies over his goodness, learning, and charm. But there were other ladies of the household, a sister-in-law and a wife, who preferred their Dr Brabant to be daughterless; and the friendship was abruptly terminated. Rufa Hennell, years later, told John Chapman (publisher and editor of the *Westminster Review*) that her father had 'acted ungenerously and worse towards Miss Evans; for though he was the chief cause of all that passed, he acted towards her as though the fault lay with her alone.' I do not suggest that the Casaubon of our story is a mere portrait of Dr Brabant: 'living' characters in fiction are not made that way. All I suggest is that if we are to join in the search for an historical parallel, Dr Brabant is by far the likeliest candidate.

There are other and less conjectural parallels which, though of no critical importance, have perhaps some biographical interest. The character of Caleb Garth is almost certainly in part a reminiscence of the author's much-loved father, Robert Evans; and as in Maggie Tulliver, of *The Mill on the Floss*, so here, in Dorothea Brooke, she was remembering and portraying at least some part of her former self, though with the significant addition of that personal beauty which she had conspicuously lacked. Dorothea is beautiful, ardent, idealistic. She is also, like the young woman who was to become her author, a sad prig. At the age of twenty she is opinionated, innocent, saintly. There is no humour in her, but there is exquisite humour and irony in her delineation. We are made equally aware both of her beauty (of person and spirit) and of her absurdity; yet our sympathy is so intimately engaged that we share for the time being, even though we are afraid of what must follow, her preposterous wish that she shall marry the dried-up pedant in whom she sees, poor girl, the fulfilment of her passion to be made use of for high ends. In the opinion of the local young men 'Miss Brooke's large eyes seemed, like her religion, too unusual and striking'; yet those who approached her found that she had a charm 'unaccountably reconcilable' with the alarming rumours of her piety, and 'most men thought her bewitching when she was on horseback.' Riding, we are told, was an indulgence which she allowed herself in spite of conscientious qualms: 'she felt that she enjoyed it in a pagan sensuous way, and always looked forward to renouncing it.'

There we have Dorothea, and there we have too the earlier, puritanical, Marian Evans. As a foil and wholesome corrective to Dorothea there is her pretty and sensible sister Celia: their contrasting characters are brilliantly realized for us in the opening scene, in which their dead mother's jewels are brought out and divided between them. The same dramatic economy, the same blend of sympathy and irony, is seen in the characterization of Mr Brooke, of Mrs Cadwallader, of her husband the rector, and of Sir James Chettam. Mr Brooke is that unusual thing, a comic character whose human reality is not diminished by the element of caricature in his portrayal. He is a jellyfish of a man, well-meaning, resolutely irresolute, his mind full of undigested fragments, his conversation aimless and repetitive and inconclusive. Through wilful ignorance and indolence, not ill nature, he is a bad landlord, unaware of the squalor in which some of his tenants live. With all this he is excellent company, in a book. So too are his neighbours. The sensible, managing Mrs Cadwallader, when Chettam says that Casaubon has no good red blood in his body, caps the remark by saying: 'No. Somebody put a drop under a magnifying glass, and it was all semi-colons and parentheses.' Her husband the rector, when accused by her of tolerating Casaubon because he owns a trout stream, says genially: 'There is something in that. It is a very good quality in a man to have a trout stream.' And Celia, having told Dorothea that Chettam is in love with her (Dorothea), achieves another of her author's lighning strokes of portraiture when she adds: 'You always see what nobody else sees: it is impossible to satisfy you. Yet you never see what is quite plain.'

In range and quality, in conception and in treatment, *Middlemarch* is by any reckoning the greatest of George Eliot's works. It has, indeed, some claim to be regarded as the greatest, because the most fully adult, English novel of its time. In its interweaving of various life-stories, against a vividly realized provincial background, it is also one of the most copious and full-blooded. Its total effect, the imaginative experience it offers, owes at least as much to its abundance as to its moments of dramatic tension. It is arguable that the tension could have been increased by pruning away all that is not strictly relevant to the two main themes, the Dorothea theme and the Lydgate-Rosamond theme: Fred Vincy's story, the gathering of the vultures round Peter Featherstone's deathbed (Dickensian in its comic gusto), Mr Farebrother's domestic situation and his love for Mary Garth, Mr Brooke's incursion into politics, and the (crudely conceived and mechanically contrived) unmasking of the evangelical Mr Bulstrode, all these could, no doubt, have been either omitted or greatly condensed. But to purchase dramatic concentration at such a cost would have been a bad artistic bargain: George Eliot was surely right when she insisted, in answer to her publisher's misgiving about the length of the book, that nothing could be left out; for it is the sustained energy with which she combines copiousness with imaginative penetration, breadth with depth, that makes *Middlemarch* so rich an experience. It is true that the only logical claim that Fred Vincy, for example, has on our attention is that he is the brother of Dr Lydgate's disastrous wife, Rosamond; but the claim suffices, and is justified; in their family likeness, and in their difference, each throws new light on the other and in retrospect on their shared childhood. Fred Vincy has some of his sister's faults: indolence, self-regard, and a blithe confidence that the universe exists to serve him. But he is redeemable, and is in fact redeemed, by Mary Garth. At his worst he is nothing worse than a moral weakling, whereas Rosamond at her best and loveliest is a monster of self-love, in whose softness and sweetness lies concealed an utterly ruthless resolve to have her own way in everything. There are few scenes in fiction more painful than the conversation between Lydgate and Rosamond in which he tells her of his financial difficulties and gets nothing from her but reproaches and self-pitying tears. Lydgate is a man of ideas and ideals, with a noble zeal for his profession, an ardent desire to reform its practice, and a passion for scientific discovery. His wife, who lives like a mole in the prison of her little ego, circumvents his high ambition at every turn; and it gradually becomes clear that by marrying her he has encompassed his own ruin. He and Dorothea, he with his disinterested humanitarian zeal, she with her radiant religious sense and her capacity for service in high causes, could have made together, one cannot help reflecting, a perfect marriage. But human life does not normally accommodate perfection, and Dorothea, with her author's approval which we cannot wholeheartedly share, finds consolation in a more trivial destiny. Will Ladislaw, though there is no harm in him, is to my mind the least satisfactory of the major characters: a man with neither subtlety nor substance.

The maxim our grandfathers used to write in their copybooks, *experientia docet*, is an implied theme in every maturely conceived life-story; and it is abundantly illustrated in George Eliot's work. With all her pride of intellect, she knew that there are things one cannot know except by experience, and that often such knowledge is bought dearly and too late. In this her penultimate novel—it was followed by *Daniel Deronda* in 1876—her vision is as broad as it is deep. She uses a large canvas but fills every inch of it and paints with a fine brush. The richness and variety of colour, the warm undertones of meaning, the mingling of comedy and tragedy and dramatic irony, the abundance of invention, the densely populated provincial background, and above all the author's imaginative saturation in her theme: these combine to make *Middlemarch* the most satisfying of her novels, the one in which, with far less pointing and nudging from her than elsewhere, the universals of life are apprehended in the particulars. I envy any reader who is approaching it for the first time.

GERALD BULLETT

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Mary Ann Evans did not adopt her pseudonym of George Eliot till she began writing fiction. Her novels, which were preceded by translations of Strauss's *Leben Jesu* (1846) and Feuerbach's *Wesen des Christenthums* (1854), both published by John Chapman, are as follows: *Scenes of Clerical Life* (three short novels), 1857; *Adam Bede*, 1859; *The Mill on the Floss*, 1860; *Silas Marner*, 1861; *Romola*, 1862–3; *Felix Holt*, 1866; *Middlemarch*, 1871–2; *Daniel Deronda*, 1876. A selection from her numerous *Westminster Review* articles was made by C. Lee Lewis, *Essays*, 1884, the volume also including her 'Leaves from a Notebook.' Her last published work was *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, 1879. Her verse, which is no longer read, includes *The Spanish Gypsy*, 1868.

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PRELUDE

Who that cares much to know the history of man, and how the mysterious mixture behaves under the varying experiments of Time, has not dwelt, at least briefly, on the life of Saint Theresa, has not smiled with some gentleness at the thought of the little girl walking forth one morning hand-in-hand with her still smaller brother, to go and seek martyrdom in the country of the Moors? Out they toddled from rugged Avila, wide-eyed and helpless-looking as two fawns, but with human hearts, already beating to a national idea; until domestic reality met them in the shape of uncles, and turned them back from their great resolve. That child-pilgrimage was a fit beginning. Theresa's passionate, ideal nature demanded an epic life: what were many-volumed romances of chivalry and the social conquests of a brilliant girl to her? Her flame quickly burned up that light fuel; and, fed from within, soared after some illimitable satisfaction, some object which would never justify weariness, which would reconcile self-despair with the rapturous consciousness of life beyond self. She found her epos in the reform of a religious order.

That Spanish woman who lived three hundred years ago was certainly not the last of her kind. Many Theresas have been born who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action; perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity; perhaps a tragic failure which found no sacred poet and sank unwept into oblivion. With dim lights and tangled circumstance they tried to shape their thought and deed in noble agreement; but after all, to common eyes their struggles seemed mere inconsistency and formlessness; for these later-born Theresas were helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul. Their ardour alternated between a vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood; so that the one was disapproved as extravagance, and the other condemned as a lapse.

Some have felt that these blundering lives are due to the inconvenient indefiniteness with which the Supreme Power has fashioned the natures of women: if there were one level of feminine incompetence as strict as the ability to count three and no more, the social lot of women might be treated with scientific certitude. Meanwhile the indefiniteness remains, and the limits of variation are really much wider than any one would imagine from the sameness of women's coiffure and the favourite love-stories in prose and verse. Here and there a cygnet is reared uneasily among the ducklings in the brown pond, and never finds the living stream in fellowship with its own oary-footed kind. Here and there is born a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing, whose loving heart-beats and sobs after an unattained goodness tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centering in some long-recognisable deed.

BOOK I

MISS BROOKE

CHAPTER I

"Since I can do no good because a woman,
Reach constantly at something that is near it."
—*The Maid's Tragedy:* BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

MISS BROOKE had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters; and her profile as well as her stature and bearing seemed to gain the more dignity from her plain garments, which by the side of provincial fashion gave her the impressiveness of a fine quotation from the Bible,—or from one of our elder poets,—in a paragraph of to-day's newspaper. She was usually spoken of as being remarkably clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common-sense. Nevertheless, Celia wore scarcely more trimmings; and it was only to close observers that her dress differed from her sister's, and had a shade of coquetry in its arrangements; for Miss Brooke's plain dressing was due to mixed conditions, in most of which her sister shared. The pride of being ladies had something to do with it: the Brooke connections, though not exactly aristocratic, were unquestionably "good": if you inquired backward for a generation or two, you would not find any yard-measuring or parcel-tying forefathers—anything lower than an admiral or a clergyman; and there was even an ancestor discernible as a Puritan gentleman who served under Cromwell, but afterwards conformed, and managed to come out of all political troubles as the proprietor of a respectable family estate. Young women of such birth, living in a quiet country-house, and attending a village church hardly larger than a parlour, naturally regarded frippery as the ambition of a huckster's daughter. Then there was well-bred economy, which in those days made show in dress the first item to be deducted from, when any margin was required for expenses more distinctive of rank. Such reasons would have been enough to account for plain dress, quite apart from religious feeling; but in Miss Brooke's case, religion alone would have determined it; and Celia mildly acquiesced in all her sister's sentiments, only infusing them with that common-sense which is able to accept momentous doctrines without any eccentric agitation. Dorothea knew many passages of Pascal's *Pensées* and of Jeremy Taylor by heart; and to her the destinies of mankind, seen by the light of Christianity, made the solicitudes of feminine fashion appear an occupation for Bedlam. She could not reconcile the anxieties of a spiritual life involving eternal consequences, with a keen interest in guimp and artificial protrusions of drapery. Her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there; she was enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractations, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it. Certainly such elements in the character of a marriageable girl tended to interfere with her lot, and hinder it from being decided according to custom, by good looks, vanity, and merely canine affection. With all this, she, the elder of the sisters, was not yet twenty, and they had both been educated, since they were about twelve years old and had lost their parents, on plans at once narrow and promiscuous, first in an English family and afterwards in a Swiss family at Lausanne, their bachelor uncle and guardian trying in this way to remedy the disadvantages of their orphaned condition.

It was hardly a year since they had come to live at Tipton Grange with their uncle, a man nearly sixty, of acquiescent temper, miscellaneous opinions, and uncertain vote. He had travelled in his younger years, and was held in this part of the country to have contracted a too rambling habit of mind. Mr. Brooke's conclusions were as difficult to predict as the weather: it was only safe to say that he would act with benevolent intentions, and that he would spend as little money as possible in carrying them out. For the most glutinously indefinite minds enclose some hard grains of habit; and a man has been seen lax about all his own interests except the retention of his snuff-box, concerning which he was watchful, suspicious, and greedy of clutch.

In Mr. Brooke the hereditary strain of Puritan energy was clearly in abeyance ; but in his niece Dorothea it glowed alike through faults and virtues, turning sometimes into impatience of her uncle's talk or his way of "letting things be" on his estate, and making her long all the more for the time when she would be of age and have some command of money for generous schemes. She was regarded as an heiress ; for not only had the sisters seven hundred a-year each from their parents, but if Dorothea married and had a son, that son would inherit Mr. Brooke's estate, presumably worth about three thousand a-year—a rental which seemed wealth to provincial families, still discussing Mr. Peel's late conduct on the Catholic Question, innocent of future gold-fields, and of that gorgeous plutocracy which has so nobly exalted the necessities of genteel life.

And how should Dorothea not marry ?—a girl so handsome and with such prospects ? Nothing could hinder it but her love of extremes, and her insistence on regulating life according to notions which might cause a wary man to hesitate before he made her an offer, or even might lead her at last to refuse all offers. A young lady of some birth and fortune, who knelt suddenly down on a brick floor by the side of a sick labourer and prayed fervidly as if she thought herself living in the time of the Apostles—who had strange whims of fasting like a Papist, and of sitting up at night to read old theological books ! Such a wife might awaken you some fine morning with a new scheme for the application of her income which would interfere with political economy and the keeping of saddle-horses : a man would naturally think twice before he risked himself in such fellowship. Women were expected to have weak opinions ; but the great safeguard of society and of domestic life was, that opinions were not acted on. Sane people did what their neighbours did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them.

The rural opinion about the new young ladies, even among the cottagers, was generally in favour of Celia, as being so amiable and innocent-looking, while Miss Brooke's large eyes seemed, like her religion, too unusual and striking. Poor Dorothea ! compared with her, the innocent-looking Celia was knowing and worldly-wise ; so much subtler is a human mind than the outside tissues which make a sort of blazonry or clock-face for it.

Yet those who approached Dorothea, though prejudiced against her by this alarming hearsay, found that she had a charm unaccountably reconcilable with it. Most men thought her bewitching when she was on horseback. She loved the fresh air and the various aspects of the country, and when her eyes and cheeks glowed with mingled pleasure she looked very little like a devotee. Riding was an indulgence which she allowed herself in spite of conscientious qualms; she felt that she enjoyed it in a pagan sensuous way, and always looked forward to renouncing it.

She was open, ardent, and not in the least self-admiring; indeed, it was pretty to see how her imagination adorned her sister Celia with attractions altogether superior to her own, and if any gentleman appeared to come to the Grange from some other motive than that of seeing Mr. Brooke, she concluded that he must be in love with Celia: Sir James Chettam, for example, whom she constantly considered from Celia's point of view, inwardly debating whether it would be good for Celia to accept him. That he should be regarded as a suitor to herself would have seemed to her a ridiculous irrelevance. Dorothea, with all her eagerness to know the truths of life, retained very childlike ideas about marriage. She felt sure that she would have accepted the judicious Hooker, if she had been born in time to save him from that wretched mistake he made in matrimony; or John Milton when his blindness had come on; or any of the other great men whose odd habits it would have been glorious piety to endure; but an amiable handsome baronet, who said "Exactly" to her remarks even when she expressed uncertainty,—how could he affect her as a lover? The really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it.

These peculiarities of Dorothea's character caused Mr. Brooke to be all the more blamed in neighbouring families for not securing some middle-aged lady as guide and companion to his nieces. But he himself dreaded so much the sort of superior woman likely to be available for such a position, that he allowed himself to be dissuaded by Dorothea's objections, and was in this case brave enough to defy the world—that is to say, Mrs. Cadwallader the Rector's wife, and the small group of gentry with whom he visited in the north-east corner of Loamshire. So Miss Brooke presided in her uncle's household, and did not at all dislike her new authority, with the homage that belonged to it.

Sir James Chettam was going to dine at the Grange to-day with another gentleman whom the girls had never seen, and about whom Dorothea felt some venerating expectation. This was the Reverend Edward Casaubon, noted in the county as a man of profound learning, understood for many years to be engaged on a great work concerning religious history; also as a man of wealth enough to give lustre to his piety, and having views of his own which were to be more clearly ascertained on the publication of his book. His very name carried an impressiveness hardly to be measured without a precise chronology of scholarship.

Early in the day Dorothea had returned from the infant school which she had set going in the village, and was taking her usual place in the pretty sitting-room which divided the bedrooms of the sisters, bent on finishing a plan for some buildings (a kind of work which she delighted in), when Celia, who had been watching her with a hesitating desire to propose something, said—

"Dorothea dear, if you don't mind—if you are not very busy—suppose we looked at mamma's jewels to-day, and divided them? It is exactly six months to-day since uncle gave them to you, and you have not looked at them yet."

Celia's face had the shadow of a pouting expression in it, the full presence of the pout being kept back by an habitual awe of Dorothea and principle; two associated facts which might show a mysterious electricity if you touched them incautiously. To her relief, Dorothea's eyes were full of laughter as she looked up.

"What a wonderful little almanac you are, Celia! Is it six calendar or six lunar months?"

"It is the last day of September now, and it was the first of April when uncle gave them to you. You know, he said that he had forgotten them till then. I believe you have never thought of them since you locked them up in the cabinet here."

"Well, dear, we should never wear them, you know." Dorothea spoke in a full cordial tone, half caressing, half explanatory. She had her pencil in her hand, and was making tiny side-plans on a margin.

Celia coloured, and looked very grave. "I think, dear, we are wanting in respect to mamma's memory, to put them by and take no notice of them. And," she added, after hesitating a little, with a rising sob of mortification, "necklaces are quite usual now; and Madame Poinçon, who was stricter in some things even than you are, used to wear ornaments. And Christians generally—surely there are women in heaven now who wore jewels." Celia was conscious of some mental strength when she really applied herself to argument.

"You would like to wear them?" exclaimed Dorothea, an air of astonished discovery animating her whole person with a dramatic action which she had caught from that very Madame Poinçon who wore the ornaments. "Of course, then, let us have them out. Why did you not tell me before? But the keys, the keys!" She pressed her hands against the sides of her head and seemed to despair of her memory.

"They are here," said Celia, with whom this explanation had been long meditated and prearranged.

"Pray open the large drawer of the cabinet and get out the jewel-box."

The casket was soon open before them, and the various jewels spread out, making a bright parterre on the table. It was no great collection, but a few of the ornaments were really of remarkable beauty, the finest that was obvious at first being a necklace of purple amethysts set in exquisite gold work, and a pearl cross with five brilliants in it. Dorothea immediately took up the necklace and fastened it round her sister's neck, where it fitted almost as closely as a bracelet; but the circle suited the Henrietta-Maria style of Celia's head and neck, and she could see that it did, in the pier-glass opposite.

"There, Celia! you can wear that with your Indian muslin. But this cross you must wear with your dark dresses."

Celia was trying not to smile with pleasure. "O Dodo, you must keep the cross yourself."

"No, no, dear, no," said Dorothea, putting up her hand with careless deprecation.

"Yes, indeed you must; it would suit you—in your black dress, now," said Celia, insistingly. "You *might* wear that."

"Not for the world, not for the world. A cross is the last thing I would wear as a trinket." Dorothea shuddered slightly.

"Then you will think it wicked in me to wear it," said Celia, uneasily.

"No, dear, no," said Dorothea, stroking her sister's cheek. "Souls have complexions too: what will suit one will not suit another."

"But you might like to keep it for mamma's sake."

"No, I have other things of mamma's—her sandal-wood box, which I am so fond of—plenty of things. In fact, they are all yours, dear. We need discuss them no longer. There—take away your property."

Celia felt a little hurt. There was a strong assumption of superiority in this Puritanic toleration, hardly less trying to the blond flesh of an unenthusiastic sister than a Puritanic persecution.

"But how can I wear ornaments if you, who are the elder sister, will never wear them?"

"Nay, Celia, that is too much to ask, that I should wear trinkets to keep you in countenance. If I were to put on such a necklace as that, I should feel as if I had been pirouetting. The world would go round with me, and I should not know how to walk."

Celia had unclasped the necklace and drawn it off. "It would be a little tight for your neck; something to lie down and hang would suit you better," she said, with some satisfaction. The complete unfitness of the necklace from all points of view for Dorothea, made Celia happier in taking it. She was opening some ring-boxes, which disclosed a fine emerald with diamonds, and just then the sun passing beyond a cloud sent a bright gleam over the table.

"How very beautiful these gems are!" said Dorothea, under a new current of feeling, as sudden as the gleam. "It is strange how deeply colours seem to penetrate one, like scent. I suppose that is the reason why gems are used as spiritual emblems in the Revelation of St. John. They look like fragments of heaven. I think that emerald is more beautiful than any of them."

"And there is a bracelet to match it," said Celia. "We did not notice this at first."

"They are lovely," said Dorothea, slipping the ring and bracelet on her finely-turned finger and wrist, and holding them towards the window on a level with her eyes. All the while her thought was trying to justify her delight in the colours by merging them in her mystic religious joy.

"Your *would* like those, Dorothea," said Celia, rather falteringly, beginning to think with wonder that her sister showed some weakness, and also that emeralds would suit her own complexion even better than purple amethysts. "You must keep that ring and bracelet—if nothing else. But see, these agates are very pretty—and quiet."

"Yes! I will keep these—this ring and bracelet," said

Dorothea. Then, letting her hand fall on the table, she said in another tone—"Yet what miserable men find such things, and work at them, and sell them!" She paused again, and Celia thought that her sister was going to renounce the ornaments, as in consistency she ought to do.

"Yes, dear, I will keep these," said Dorothea, decidedly. "But take all the rest away, and the casket."

She took up her pencil without removing the jewels, and still looking at them. She thought of often having them by her, to feed her eye at these little fountains of pure colour.

"Shall you wear them in company?" said Celia, who was watching her with real curiosity as to what she would do.

Dorothea glanced quickly at her sister. Across all her imaginative adornment of those whom she loved, there darted now and then a keen discernment, which was not without a scorching quality. If Miss Brooke ever attained perfect meekness, it would not be for lack of inward fire.

"Perhaps," she said, rather haughtily. "I cannot tell to what level I may sink."

Celia blushed, and was unhappy; she saw that she had offended her sister, and dared not say even anything pretty about the gift of the ornaments which she put back into the box and carried away. Dorothea too was unhappy, as she went on with her plan-drawing, questioning the purity of her own feeling and speech in the scene which had ended with that little explosion.

Celia's consciousness told her that she had not been at all in the wrong: it was quite natural and justifiable that she should have asked that question, and she repeated to herself that Dorothea was inconsistent: either she should have taken her full share of the jewels, or, after what she had said, she should have renounced them altogether.

"I am sure—at least, I trust," thought Celia, "that the wearing of a necklace will not interfere with my prayers. And I do not see that I should be bound by Dorothea's opinions now we are going into society, though of course she herself ought to be bound by them. But Dorothea is not always consistent."

Thus Celia, mutely bending over her tapestry, until she heard her sister calling her.

"Here, Kitty, come and look at my plan; I shall think I am a great architect, if I have not got incompatible stairs and fireplaces."

As Celia bent over the paper, Dorothea put her cheek against her sister's arm caressingly. Celia understood the action. Dorothea saw that she had been in the wrong, and Celia pardoned her. Since they could remember, there had been a mixture of criticism and awe in the attitude of Celia's mind towards her elder sister. The younger had always worn a yoke; but is there any yoked creature without its private opinions?

CHAPTER II

"'Dime; no ves aquel caballero que hácia nosotros viene sobre un caballo rucio rodado que trae puesto en la cabeza un yelmo de oro?' 'Lo que veo y columbro,' respondiò Sancho, 'no es sino un hombre sobre un asno pardo como el mio, que trae sobre la cabeza una cosa que relumbra.' 'Pues ese es el yelmo de Mambrino,' dijo Don Quijote."—CERVANTES.

"'Seest thou not yon cavalier who cometh toward us on a dapple-grey steed, and weareth a golden helmet?' 'What I see,' answered Sancho, 'is nothing but a man on a grey ass like my own, who carries something shiny on his head.' 'Just so,' answered Don Quixote: 'and that resplendent object is the helmet of Mambrino.'"

"SIR HUMPHRY DAVY?" said Mr. Brooke, over the soup, in his easy smiling way, taking up Sir James Chettam's remark that he was studying Davy's Agricultural Chemistry. "Well, now, Sir Humphry Davy: I dined with him years ago at Cartwright's, and Wordsworth was there too—the poet Wordsworth, you know. Now there was something singular. I was at Cambridge when Wordsworth was there, and I never met him—and I dined with him twenty years afterwards at Cartwright's. There's an oddity in things, now. But Davy was there: he was a poet too. Or, as I may say, Wordsworth was poet one, and Davy was poet two. That was true in every sense, you know."

Dorothea felt a little more uneasy than usual. In the beginning of dinner, the party being small and the room still, these motes from the mass of a magistrate's mind fell too noticeably. She wondered how a man like Mr. Casaubon would support such triviality. His manners, she thought, were very dignified; the set of his iron-grey hair and his deep eye-sockets made him resemble the portrait of Locke. He had the spare form and the pale complexion which became a student; as different as possible from the blooming Englishman of the red-whiskered type represented by Sir James Chettam.

"I am reading the Agricultural Chemistry," said this excellent baronet, "because I am going to take one of the farms into my own hands, and see if something cannot be done in setting a good pattern of farming among my tenants. Do you approve of that, Miss Brooke?"

"A great mistake, Chettam," interposed Mr. Brooke, "going into electrifying your land and that kind of thing, and making a parlour of your cow-house. It won't do. I went into science a great deal myself at one time; but I saw it would not do. It leads to everything; you can let nothing alone. No, no—see that your tenants don't sell their straw, and that kind of thing; and give them draining-tiles, you know. But your fancy-farming will not do—the most expensive sort of whistle you can buy: you may as well keep a pack of hounds."

"Surely," said Dorothea, "it is better to spend money in finding out how men can make the most of the land which supports them all, than in keeping dogs and horses only to gallop over it. It is not a sin to make yourself poor in performing experiments for the good of all."

She spoke with more energy than is expected of so young a lady, but Sir James had appealed to her. He was accustomed to do so, and she had often thought that she could urge him to many good actions when he was her brother-in-law.

Mr. Casaubon turned his eyes very markedly on Dorothea while she was speaking, and seemed to observe her newly.

"Young ladies don't understand political economy, you know," said Mr. Brooke, smiling towards Mr. Casaubon. "I remember when we were all reading Adam Smith. *There* is a book, now. I took in all the new ideas at one time—human perfectibility, now. But some say, history moves in circles; and that may be very well argued; I have argued it myself. The fact is, human reason may carry you a little too far—over the hedge, in fact. It carried me a good way at one time; but I saw it would not do. I pulled up; I pulled up in time. But not too hard. I have always been in favour of a little theory: we must have Thought; else we shall be landed back in the dark ages. But talking of books, there is Southey's 'Peninsular War.' I am reading that of a morning. You know Southey?"

"No," said Mr. Casaubon, not keeping pace with Mr. Brooke's impetuous reason, and thinking of the book only. "I have little leisure for such literature just now. I have been using up my eyesight on old characters lately; the fact is, I want a reader for my evenings; but I am fastidious in voices, and I cannot endure listening to an imperfect reader. It is a misfortune, in some senses: I feed too much on the inward sources;

I live too much with the dead. My mind is something like the ghost of an ancient, wandering about the world and trying mentally to construct it as it used to be, in spite of ruin and confusing changes. But I find it necessary to use the utmost caution about my eyesight."

This was the first time that Mr. Casaubon had spoken at any length. He delivered himself with precision, as if he had been called upon to make a public statement; and the balanced sing-song neatness of his speech, occasionally corresponded to by a movement of his head, was the more conspicuous from its contrast with good Mr. Brooke's scrappy slovenliness. Dorothea said to herself that Mr. Casaubon was the most interesting man she had ever seen, not excepting even Monsieur Liret, the Vaudois clergyman who had given conferences on the history of the Waldenses. To reconstruct a past world, doubtless with a view to the highest purposes of truth—what a work to be in any way present at, to assist in, though only as a lamp-holder! This elevating thought lifted her above her annoyance at being twitted with her ignorance of political economy, that never-explained science which was thrust as an extinguisher over all her lights.

"But you are fond of riding, Miss Brooke," Sir James presently took an opportunity of saying. "I should have thought you would enter a little into the pleasures of hunting. I wish you would let me send over a chestnut horse for you to try. It has been trained for a lady. I saw you on Saturday cantering over the hill on a nag not worthy of you. My groom shall bring Corydon for you every day, if you will only mention the time."

"Thank you, you are very good. I mean to give up riding. I shall not ride any more," said Dorothea, urged to this brusque resolution by a little annoyance that Sir James would be soliciting her attention when she wanted to give it all to Mr. Casaubon.

"No, that is too hard," said Sir James, in a tone of reproach that showed strong interest. "Your sister is given to self-mortification, is she not?" he continued, turning to Celia, who sat at his right hand.

"I think she is," said Celia, feeling afraid lest she should say something that would not please her sister, and blushing as prettily as possible above her necklace. "She likes giving up."

"If that were true, Celia, my giving-up would be self-indulgence, not self-mortification. But there may be good reasons for choosing not to do what is very agreeable," said Dorothea.

Mr. Brooke was speaking at the same time, but it was evident that Mr. Casaubon was observing Dorothea, and she was aware of it.

"Exactly," said Sir James. "You give up from some high, generous motive."

"No, indeed, not exactly. I did not say that of myself," answered Dorothea, reddening. Unlike Celia, she rarely blushed, and only from high delight or anger. At this moment she felt angry with the perverse Sir James. Why did he not pay attention to Celia, and leave her to listen to Mr. Casaubon?—if that learned man would only talk, instead of allowing himself to be talked to by Mr. Brooke, who was just then informing him that the Reformation either meant something or it did not, that he himself was a Protestant to the core, but that Catholicism was a fact; and as to refusing an acre of your ground for a Romanist chapel, all men needed the bridle of religion, which, properly speaking, was the dread of a Hereafter.

"I made a great study of theology at one time," said Mr. Brooke, as if to explain the insight just manifested. "I know something of all schools. I knew Wilberforce in his best days. Do you know Wilberforce?"

Mr. Casaubon said, "No."

"Well, Wilberforce was perhaps not enough of a thinker; but if I went into Parliament, as I have been asked to do, I should sit on the independent bench, as Wilberforce did, and work at philanthropy."

Mr. Casaubon bowed, and observed that it was a wide field.

"Yes," said Mr. Brooke, with an easy smile, "but I have documents. I began a long while ago to collect documents. They want arranging, but when a question has struck me, I have written to somebody and got an answer. I have documents at my back. But now, how do you arrange your documents?"

"In pigeon-holes partly," said Mr. Casaubon, with rather a startled air of effort.

"Ah, pigeon-holes will not do. I have tried pigeon-holes, but everything gets mixed in pigeon-holes: I never know whether a paper is in A or Z."

"I wish you would let me sort your papers for you, uncle," said Dorothea. "I would letter them all, and then make a list of subjects under each letter."

Mr. Casaubon gravely smiled approval, and said to Mr. Brooke, "You have an excellent secretary at hand, you perceive."

"No, no," said Mr. Brooke, shaking his head; "I cannot let young ladies meddle with my documents. Young ladies are too flighty."

Dorothea felt hurt. Mr. Casaubon would think that her uncle had some special reason for delivering this opinion, whereas the remark lay in his mind as lightly as the broken wing of an insect among all the other fragments there, and a chance current had sent it alighting on *her*.

When the two girls were in the drawing-room alone, Celia said—

"How very ugly Mr. Casaubon is!"

"Celia! He is one of the most distinguished-looking men I ever saw. He is remarkably like the portrait of Locke. He has the same deep eye-sockets."

"Had Locke those two white moles with hairs on them?"

"Oh, I daresay! when people of a certain sort looked at him," said Dorothea, walking away a little.

"Mr. Casaubon is so sallow."

"All the better. I suppose you admire a man with the complexion of a *cochon de lait*."

"Dodo!" exclaimed Celia, looking after her in surprise. "I never heard you make such a comparison before."

"Why should I make it before the occasion came? It is a good comparison: the match is perfect."

Miss Brooke was clearly forgetting herself, and Celia thought so.

"I wonder you show temper, Dorothea."

"It is so painful in you, Celia, that you will look at human beings as if they were merely animals with a toilette, and never see the great soul in a man's face."

"Has Mr. Casaubon a great soul?" Celia was not without a touch of naïve malice.

"Yes, I believe he has," said Dorothea, with the full voice of decision. "Everything I see in him corresponds to his pamphlet on Biblical Cosmology."

"He talks very little," said Celia.

"There is no one for him to talk to."

Celia thought privately, "Dorothea quite despises Sir James Chettam; I believe she would not accept him." Celia felt that this was a pity. She had never been deceived as to the object of the baronet's interest. Sometimes, indeed, she had reflected that Dodo would perhaps not make a husband happy who had not her way of looking at things; and stifled in the depths of her heart was the feeling that her sister was too religious for family comfort. Notions and scruples were like spilt needles, making one afraid of treading, or sitting down, or even eating.

When Miss Brooke was at the tea-table, Sir James came to sit down by her, not having felt her mode of answering him at all offensive. Why should he? He thought it probable that Miss Brooke liked him, and manners must be very marked indeed before they cease to be interpreted by preconceptions either confident or distrustful. She was thoroughly charming to him, but of course he theorised a little about his attachment. He was made of excellent human dough, and had the rare merit of knowing that his talents, even if let loose, would not set the smallest stream in the county on fire: hence he liked the prospect of a wife to whom he could say, "What shall we do?" about this or that; who could help her husband out with reasons, and would also have the property qualification for doing so. As to the excessive religiousness alleged against Miss Brooke, he had a very indefinite notion of what it consisted in, and thought that it would die out with marriage. In short, he felt himself to be in love in the right place, and was ready to endure a great deal of predominance, which, after all, a man could always put down when he liked. Sir James had no idea that he should ever like to put down the predominance of this handsome girl, in whose cleverness he delighted. Why not? A man's mind—what there is of it—has always the advantage of being masculine,—as the smallest birch-tree is of a higher kind than the most soaring palm,—and even his ignorance is of a sounder quality. Sir James might not have originated this estimate; but a kind Providence furnishes the limpest personality with a little gum or starch in the form of tradition.

"Let me hope that you will rescind that resolution about the horse, Miss Brooke," said the persevering admirer. "I assure you, riding is the most healthy of exercises."

"I am aware of it," said Dorothea, coldly. "I think it would do Celia good—if she would take to it."

"But you are such a perfect horsewoman."

"Excuse me; I have had very little practice, and I should be easily thrown."

"Then that is a reason for more practice. Every lady ought to be a perfect horsewoman, that she may accompany her husband."

"You see how widely we differ, Sir James. I have made up my mind that I ought not to be a perfect horsewoman, and so I should never correspond to your pattern of a lady." Dorothea looked straight before her, and spoke with cold brusquerie, very much with the air of a handsome boy, in amusing contrast with the solicitous amiability of her admirer.

"I should like to know your reasons for this cruel resolution. It is not possible that you should think horsemanship wrong."

"It is quite possible that I should think it wrong for me."

"Oh, why?" said Sir James, in a tender tone of remonstrance.

Mr. Casaubon had come up to the table, tea-cup in hand, and was listening.

"We must not inquire too curiously into motives," he interposed, in his measured way. "Miss Brooke knows that they are apt to become feeble in the utterance: the aroma is mixed with the grosser air. We must keep the germinating grain away from the light."

Dorothea coloured with pleasure, and looked up gratefully to the speaker. Here was a man who could understand the higher inward life, and with whom there could be some spiritual communion; nay, who could illuminate principle with the widest knowledge: a man whose learning almost amounted to a proof of whatever he believed!

Dorothea's inferences may seem large; but really life could never have gone on at any period but for this liberal allowance of conclusions, which has facilitated marriage under the difficulties of civilisation. Has any one ever pinched into its pilulous smallness the cobweb of pre-matrimonial acquaintanceship?

"Certainly," said good Sir James. "Miss Brooke shall not be urged to tell reasons she would rather be silent upon. I am sure her reasons would do her honour."

He was not in the least jealous of the interest with which Dorothea had looked up at Mr. Casaubon: it never occurred to him that a girl to whom he was meditating an offer of marriage could care for a dried bookworm towards fifty, except, indeed, in a religious sort of way, as for a clergyman of some distinction.

However, since Miss Brooke had become engaged in a conversation with Mr. Casaubon about the Vaudois clergy, Sir James betook himself to Celia, and talked to her about her sister; spoke of a house in town, and asked whether Miss Brooke disliked London. Away from her sister, Celia talked quite easily, and Sir James said to himself that the second Miss Brooke was certainly very agreeable as well as pretty, though not, as some people pretended, more clever and sensible than the elder sister. He felt that he had chosen the one who was in all respects the superior; and a man naturally likes to look forward to having the best. He would be the very Mawworm of bachelors who pretended not to expect it.

CHAPTER III

> "Say, goddess, what ensued, when Raphaël,
> The affable archangel . . .
> Eve
> The story heard attentive, and was filled
> With admiration, and deep muse, to hear
> Of things so high and strange."
> —*Paradise Lost*, B. vii.

If it had really occurred to Mr. Casaubon to think of Miss Brooke as a suitable wife for him, the reasons that might induce her to accept him were already planted in her mind, and by the evening of the next day the reasons had budded and bloomed. For they had had a long conversation in the morning, while Celia, who did not like the company of Mr. Casaubon's moles and sallowness, had escaped to the vicarage to play with the curate's ill-shod but merry children.

Dorothea by this time had looked deep into the ungauged reservoir of Mr. Casaubon's mind, seeing reflected there in vague labyrinthine extension every quality she herself brought; had opened much of her own experience to him, and had understood from him the scope of his great work, also of attractively labyrinthine extent. For he had been as instructive as Milton's "affable archangel"; and with something of the archangelic manner he told her how he had undertaken to show (what indeed had been attempted before, but not with that thoroughness, justice of comparison, and effectiveness of arrangement at which Mr. Casaubon aimed) that all the mythical systems or erratic mythical fragments in the world were corruptions of a tradition originally revealed. Having once mastered the true position and taken a firm footing there, the vast field of mythical constructions became intelligible, nay, luminous with the reflected light of correspondences. But to gather in this great harvest of truth was no light or speedy work. His notes already made a formidable range of volumes, but the crowning task would be to condense these voluminous still-accumulating results and bring them, like the earlier vintage of Hippocratic books, to fit a little shelf. In explaining this to Dorothea, Mr. Casaubon expressed himself nearly as he would have done to a fellow-student, for he had not two styles of talking at command: it is true that when he used a Greek or Latin phrase he always gave the English with scrupulous care, but he would probably have done this in any case. A learned provincial clergyman is accustomed to think of his acquaintances as of "lords, knyghtes, and other noble and worthi men, that conne Latyn but lytille."

Dorothea was altogether captivated by the wide embrace of this conception. Here was something beyond the shallows of ladies'-school literature: here was a living Bossuet, whose work would reconcile complete knowledge with devoted piety; here was a modern Augustine who united the glories of doctor and saint.

The sanctity seemed no less clearly marked than the learning, for when Dorothea was impelled to open her mind on certain themes which she could speak of to no one whom she had before seen at Tipton, especially on the secondary importance of ecclesiastical forms and articles of belief compared with that spiritual religion, that submergence of self in communion with Divine perfection which seemed to her to be expressed in the best Christian books of widely-distant ages, she found in Mr. Casaubon a listener who understood her at once, who could assure her of his own agreement with that view when duly tempered with wise conformity, and could mention historical examples before unknown to her.

"He thinks with me," said Dorothea to herself, "or rather, he thinks a whole world of which my thought is but a poor twopenny mirror. And his feelings too, his whole experience—what a lake compared with my little pool!"

Miss Brooke argued from words and dispositions not less unhesitatingly than other young ladies of her age. Signs are small measurable things, but interpretations are illimitable, and in girls of sweet, ardent nature, every sign is apt to conjure up wonder, hope, belief, vast as a sky, and coloured by a diffused thimbleful of matter in the shape of knowledge. They are not always too grossly deceived; for Sinbad himself may have fallen by good-luck on a true description, and wrong reasoning sometimes lands poor mortals in right conclusions: starting a long way off the true point, and proceeding by loops and zigzags, we now and then arrive just where we ought to be. Because Miss Brooke was hasty in her trust, it is not therefore clear that Mr. Casaubon was unworthy of it.

He stayed a little longer than he had intended, on a slight

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pressure of invitation from Mr. Brooke, who offered no bait except his own documents on machine-breaking and rick-burning. Mr. Casaubon was called into the library to look at these in a heap, while his host picked up first one and then the other to read aloud from in a skipping and uncertain way, passing from one unfinished passage to another with a "Yes, now, but here!" and finally pushing them all aside to open the journal of his youthful Continental travels.

"Look here—here is all about Greece. Rhamnus, the ruins of Rhamnus—you are a great Grecian, now. I don't know whether you have given much study to the topography. I spent no end of time in making out these things—Helicon, now. Here, now!—'We started the next morning for Parnassus, the double-peaked Parnassus.' All this volume is about Greece, you know," Mr. Brooke wound up, rubbing his thumb transversely along the edges of the leaves as he held the book forward.

Mr. Casaubon made a dignified though somewhat sad audience; bowed in the right place, and avoided looking at anything documentary as far as possible, without showing disregard or impatience; mindful that this desultoriness was associated with the institutions of the country, and that the man who took him on this severe mental scamper was not only an amiable host, but a landholder and *custos rotulorum*. Was his endurance aided also by the reflection that Mr. Brooke was the uncle of Dorothea?

Certainly he seemed more and more bent on making her talk to him, on drawing her out, as Celia remarked to herself; and in looking at her, his face was often lit up by a smile like pale wintry sunshine. Before he left the next morning, while taking a pleasant walk with Miss Brooke along the gravelled terrace, he had mentioned to her that he felt the disadvantage of loneliness, the need of that cheerful companionship with which the presence of youth can lighten or vary the serious toils of maturity. And he delivered this statement with as much careful precision as if he had been a diplomatic envoy whose words would be attended with results. Indeed, Mr. Casaubon was not used to expect that he should have to repeat or revise his communications of a practical or personal kind. The inclinations which he had deliberately stated on the 2d of October he would think it enough to refer to by the mention of that date; judging by the standard of his own memory, which was a volume where a *vide supra* could serve instead of repetitions, and not the ordinary long-used blotting-book which only tells of forgotten writing. But in this case Mr. Casaubon's confidence was not likely to be falsified, for Dorothea heard and retained what he said with the eager interest of a fresh young nature to which every variety in experience is an epoch.

It was three o'clock in the beautiful breezy autumn day when Mr. Casaubon drove off to his Rectory at Lowick, only five miles from Tipton; and Dorothea, who had on her bonnet and shawl, hurried along the shrubbery and across the park that she might wander through the bordering wood with no other visible companionship than that of Monk, the Great St. Bernard dog, who always took care of the young ladies in their walks. There had risen before her the girl's vision of a possible future for herself to which she looked forward with trembling hope, and she wanted to wander on in that visionary future without interruption. She walked briskly in the brisk air, the colour rose in her cheeks, and her straw-bonnet (which our contemporaries might look at with conjectural curiosity as at an obsolete form of basket) fell a little backward. She would perhaps be hardly characterised enough if it were omitted that she wore her brown hair flatly braided and coiled behind so as to expose the outline of her head in a daring manner at a time when public feeling required the meagreness of nature to be dissimulated by tall barricades of frizzed curls and bows, never surpassed by any great race except the Feejeean. This was a trait of Miss Brooke's asceticism. But there was nothing of an ascetic's expression in her bright full eyes, as she looked before her, not consciously seeing, but absorbing into the intensity of her mood, the solemn glory of the afternoon with its long swathes of light between the far-off rows of limes, whose shadows touched each other.

All people, young or old (that is, all people in those ante-reform times), would have thought her an interesting object if they had referred the glow in her eyes and cheeks to the newly-awakened ordinary images of young love: the illusions of Chloe about Strephon have been sufficiently consecrated in poetry, as the pathetic loveliness of all spontaneous trust ought to be. Miss Pippin adoring young Pumpkin and dreaming along endless vistas of unwearying companionship, was a little drama which never tired our fathers and mothers, and had been put into all costumes. Let but Pumpkin have a figure which would sustain the disadvantages of the short-waisted swallow-tail, and everybody felt it not only natural but necessary to the perfection of womanhood, that a sweet girl should be at once convinced of his virtue, his exceptional ability, and above all, his perfect sincerity. But perhaps no persons then living—certainly none in the neighbourhood of Tipton—would have had a sympathetic understanding for the dreams of a girl whose notions about marriage took their colour entirely from an exalted enthusiasm about the ends of life, an enthusiasm which was lit chiefly by its own fire, and included neither the niceties of the *trousseau*, the pattern of plate, nor even the honours and sweet joys of the blooming matron.

It had now entered Dorothea's mind that Mr. Casaubon might wish to make her his wife, and the idea that he would do so touched her with a sort of reverential gratitude. How good of him—nay, it would be almost as if a winged messenger had suddenly stood beside her path and held out his hand towards her! For a long while she had been oppressed by the indefiniteness which hung in her mind, like a thick summer haze, over all her desire to make her life greatly effective. What could she do, what ought she to do?—she, hardly more than a budding woman, but yet with an active conscience and a great mental need, not to be satisfied by a girlish instruction comparable to the nibblings and judgments of a discursive mouse. With some endowment of stupidity and conceit, she might have thought that a Christian young lady of fortune should find her ideal of life in village charities, patronage of the humbler clergy, the perusal of 'Female Scripture Characters,' unfolding the private experience of Sara under the Old Dispensation, and Dorcas under the New, and the care of her soul over her embroidery in her own boudoir—with a background of prospective marriage to a man who, if less strict than herself, as being involved in affairs religiously inexplicable, might be prayed for and seasonably exhorted. From such contentment poor Dorothea was shut out. The intensity of her religious disposition, the coercion it exercised over her life, was but one aspect of a nature altogether ardent, theoretic, and intellectually consequent: and with such a nature, struggling in the bands of a narrow teaching, hemmed in by a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses, a walled-in maze of small paths that led no whither, the outcome was sure to strike others as at once exaggeration and inconsistency. The thing which seemed to her best, she wanted to justify by the completest knowledge; and not to live in a pretended admission of rules which were never acted on. Into this soul-hunger as yet all her youthful passion was poured; the union which attracted her was one that would deliver her from her girlish subjection to her own ignorance, and give her the freedom of voluntary submission to a guide who would take her along the grandest path.

"I should learn everything then," she said to herself, still walking quickly along the bridle road through the wood. "It would be my duty to study that I might help him the better in his great works. There would be nothing trivial about our lives. Everyday-things with us would mean the greatest things. It would be like marrying Pascal. I should learn to see the truth by the same light as great men have seen it by. And then I should know what to do, when I got older: I should see how it was possible to lead a grand life here—now—in England. I don't feel sure about doing good in any way now: everything seems like going on a mission to a people whose language I don't know;—unless it were building good cottages—there can be no doubt about that. Oh, I hope I should be able to get the people well housed in Lowick! I will draw plenty of plans while I have time."

Dorothea checked herself suddenly with self-rebuke for the presumptuous way in which she was reckoning on uncertain events, but she was spared any inward effort to change the direction of her thoughts by the appearance of a cantering horseman round a turning of the road. The well-groomed chestnut horse and two beautiful setters could leave no doubt that the rider was Sir James Chettam. He discerned Dorothea, jumped off his horse at once, and, having delivered it to his groom, advanced towards her with something white on his arm, at which the two setters were barking in an excited manner.

"How delightful to meet you, Miss Brooke," he said, raising his hat and showing his sleekly-waving blond hair. "It has hastened the pleasure I was looking forward to."

Miss Brooke was annoyed at the interruption. This amiable baronet, really a suitable husband for Celia, exaggerated the necessity of making himself agreeable to the elder sister. Even a prospective brother-in-law may be an oppression if he will always be presupposing too good an understanding with you, and agreeing with you even when you contradict him. The thought that he had made the mistake of paying his addresses to herself could not take shape: all her mental activity was used up in persuasions of another kind. But he was positively obtrusive at this moment, and his dimpled hands were quite disagreeable. Her roused temper made her colour deeply, as she returned his greeting with some haughtiness.

Sir James interpreted the heightened colour in the way most gratifying to himself, and thought he never saw Miss Brooke looking so handsome.

"I have brought a little petitioner," he said, "or rather, I have brought him to see if he will be approved before his petition is offered." He showed the white object under his arm, which was a tiny Maltese puppy, one of nature's most naïve toys.

"It is painful to me to see these creatures that are bred merely as pets," said Dorothea, whose opinion was forming itself that very moment (as opinions will) under the heat of irritation.

"Oh, why?" said Sir James, as they walked forward.

"I believe all the petting that is given them does not make them happy. They are too helpless: their lives are too frail. A weasel or a mouse that gets its own living is more interesting. I like to think that the animals about us have souls something like our own, and either carry on their own little affairs or can be companions to us, like Monk here. Those creatures are parasitic."

"I am so glad I know that you do not like them," said good Sir James. "I should never keep them for myself, but ladies usually are fond of these Maltese dogs. Here, John, take this dog, will you?"

The objectionable puppy, whose nose and eyes were equally black and expressive, was thus got rid of, since Miss Brooke decided that it had better not have been born. But she felt it necessary to explain.

"You must not judge of Celia's feeling from mine. I think she likes these small pets. She had a tiny terrier once, which she was very fond of. It made me unhappy, because I was afraid of treading on it. I am rather short-sighted."

"You have your own opinion about everything, Miss Brooke, and it is always a good opinion."

What answer was possible to such stupid complimenting?

"Do you know, I envy you that," Sir James said, as they continued walking at the rather brisk pace set by Dorothea.

"I don't quite understand what you mean."

"Your power of forming an opinion. I can form an opinion of persons. I know when I like people. But about other matters, do you know, I have often a difficulty in deciding. One hears very sensible things said on opposite sides."

"Or that seem sensible. Perhaps we don't always discriminate between sense and nonsense."

Dorothea felt that she was rather rude.

"Exactly," said Sir James. "But you seem to have the power of discrimination."

"On the contrary, I am often unable to decide. But that is from ignorance. The right conclusion is there all the same, though I am unable to see it."

"I think there are few who would see it more readily. Do you know, Lovegood was telling me yesterday that you had the best notion in the world of a plan for cottages—quite wonderful for a young lady, he thought. You had a real *genus*, to use his expression. He said you wanted Mr. Brooke to build a new set of cottages, but he seemed to think it hardly probable that your uncle would consent. Do you know, that is one of the things I wish to do—I mean, on my own estate? I should be so glad to carry out that plan of yours, if you would let me see it. Of course, it is sinking money; that is why people object to it. Labourers can never pay rent to make it answer. But, after all, it is worth doing."

"Worth doing! yes, indeed," said Dorothea, energetically, forgetting her previous small vexations. "I think we deserve to be beaten out of our beautiful houses with a scourge of small cords—all of us who let tenants live in such sties as we see round us. Life in cottages might be happier than ours, if they were real houses fit for human beings from whom we expect duties and affections."

"Will you show me your plan?"

"Yes, certainly. I daresay it is very faulty. But I have been examining all the plans for cottages in Loudon's book, and picked out what seem the best things. Oh what a happiness it would be to set the pattern about here! I think, instead of Lazarus at the gate, we should put the pig-sty cottages outside the park-gate."

Dorothea was in the best temper now. Sir James, as brother-in-law, building model cottages on his estate, and then, perhaps, others being built at Lowick, and more and more elsewhere in imitation—it would be as if the spirit of Oberlin had passed over the parishes to make the life of poverty beautiful!

Sir James saw all the plans, and took one away to consult upon with Lovegood. He also took away a complacent sense that he was making great progress in Miss Brooke's good opinion. The Maltese puppy was not offered to Celia; an omission which Dorothea afterwards thought of with surprise; but she blamed herself for it. She had been engrossing Sir James. After all, it was a relief that there was no puppy to tread upon.

Celia was present while the plans were being examined, and observed Sir James's illusion. "He thinks that Dodo cares about him, and she only cares about her plans. Yet I am not certain that she would refuse him if she thought he would let her manage everything and carry out all her notions. And how very uncomfortable Sir James would be! I cannot bear notions."

It was Celia's private luxury to indulge in this dislike. She dared not confess it to her sister in any direct statement, for that would be laying herself open to a demonstration that she was somehow or other at war with all goodness. But on safe opportunities, she had an indirect mode of making her negative wisdom tell upon Dorothea, and calling her down from her rhapsodic mood by reminding her that people were staring, not listening. Celia was not impulsive: what she had to say could wait, and came from her always with the same quiet, staccato evenness. When people talked with energy and emphasis she watched their faces and features merely. She never could understand how well-bred persons consented to sing and open their mouths in the ridiculous manner requisite for that vocal exercise.

It was not many days before Mr. Casaubon paid a morning visit, on which he was invited again for the following week to dine and stay the night. Thus Dorothea had three more conversations with him, and was convinced that her first impressions had been just. He was all she had at first imagined him to be: almost everything he had said seemed like a specimen from a mine, or the inscription on the door of a museum which might open on the treasures of past ages; and this trust in his mental wealth was all the deeper and more effective on her inclination because it was now obvious that his visits were made for her sake. This accomplished man condescended to think of a young girl, and take the pains to talk to her, not with absurd compliment, but with an appeal to her understanding, and sometimes with instructive correction. What delightful companionship! Mr. Casaubon seemed even unconscious that trivialities existed, and never handed round that small-talk of heavy men which is as acceptable as stale bride-cake brought forth with an odour of cupboard. He talked of what he was interested in, or else he was silent and bowed with sad civility. To Dorothea this was adorable genuineness, and religious abstinence from that artificiality which uses up the soul in the efforts of pretence. For she looked as reverently at Mr. Casaubon's religious elevation above herself as she did at his intellect and learning. He assented to her expressions of devout feeling, and usually with an appropriate quotation; he allowed himself to say that he had gone through some spiritual conflicts in his youth; in short, Dorothea saw that here she might reckon on understanding sympathy and guidance. On one—only one—of her favourite themes she was disappointed. Mr. Casaubon apparently did not care about building cottages, and diverted the talk to the extremely narrow accommodation which was to be had in the dwellings of the ancient Egyptians, as if to check a too high standard. After he was gone, Dorothea dwelt with some agitation on this indifference of his; and her mind was much exercised with arguments drawn from the varying conditions of climate which modify human needs, and from the admitted wickedness of pagan despots. Should she not urge these arguments on Mr. Casaubon when he came again? But further reflection told her that she was presumptuous in demanding his attention to such a subject; he would not disapprove of her occupying herself with it in leisure moments, as other women expected to occupy themselves with their dress and embroidery—would not forbid it when—— Dorothea felt rather ashamed as she detected herself in these speculations. But her uncle had been invited to go to Lowick to stay a couple of days: was it reasonable to suppose that Mr. Casaubon delighted in Mr. Brooke's society for its own sake, either with or without documents?

Meanwhile that little disappointment made her delight the more in Sir James Chettam's readiness to set on foot the desired improvements. He came much oftener than Mr. Casaubon, and Dorothea ceased to find him disagreeable since he showed himself so entirely in earnest; for he had already entered with much practical ability into Lovegood's estimates, and was charmingly docile. She proposed to build a couple of cottages, and transfer two families from their old cabins, which could then be pulled down, so that new ones could be built on the old sites. Sir James said, "Exactly," and she bore the word remarkably well.

Certainly these men who had so few spontaneous ideas might be very useful members of society under good feminine direction, if they were fortunate in choosing their sisters-in-law! It is difficult to say whether there was or was not a little wilfulness in her continuing blind to the possibility that another sort of choice was in question in relation to her. But her life was just now full of hope and action: she was not only thinking of her plans, but getting down learned books from the library and reading many things hastily (that she might be a little less ignorant in talking to Mr. Casaubon), all the while being visited with conscientious questionings whether she were not exalting these poor doings above measure and contemplating them with that self-satisfaction which was the last doom of ignorance and folly.

CHAPTER IV

"*1st Gent.* Our deeds are fetters that we forge ourselves.
2nd Gent. Ay, truly: but I think it is the world
That brings the iron."

"Sir James seems determined to do everything you wish," said Celia, as they were driving home from an inspection of the new building-site.

"He is a good creature, and more sensible than any one would imagine," said Dorothea, inconsiderately.

"You mean that he appears silly."

"No, no," said Dorothea, recollecting herself, and laying her hand on her sister's a moment, "but he does not talk equally well on all subjects."

"I should think none but disagreeable people do," said Celia, in her usual purring way. "They must be very dreadful to live with. Only think! at breakfast, and always."

Dorothea laughed. "O Kitty, you are a wonderful creature!" She pinched Celia's chin, being in the mood now to think her very winning and lovely—fit hereafter to be an eternal cherub, and if it were not doctrinally wrong to say so, hardly more in need of salvation than a squirrel. "Of course people need not be always talking well. Only one tells the quality of their minds when they try to talk well."

"You mean that Sir James tries and fails."

"I was speaking generally. Why do you catechise me about Sir James? It is not the object of his life to please me."

"Now, Dodo, can you really believe that?"

"Certainly. He thinks of me as a future sister—that is all." Dorothea had never hinted this before, waiting, from a certain shyness on such subjects which was mutual between the sisters, until it should be introduced by some decisive event. Celia blushed, but said at once—

"Pray do not make that mistake any longer, Dodo. When

Tantripp was brushing my hair the other day, she said that Sir James's man knew from Mrs Cadwallader's maid that Sir James was to marry the eldest Miss Brooke."

"How can you let Tantripp talk such gossip to you, Celia?" said Dorothea, indignantly, not the less angry because details asleep in her memory were now awakened to confirm the unwelcome revelation. "You must have asked her questions. It is degrading."

"I see no harm at all in Tantripp's talking to me. It is better to hear what people say. You see what mistakes you make by taking up notions. I am quite sure that Sir James means to make you an offer; and he believes that you will accept him, especially since you have been so pleased with him about the plans. And uncle too—I know he expects it. Every one can see that Sir James is very much in love with you."

The revulsion was so strong and painful in Dorothea's mind that the tears welled up and flowed abundantly. All her dear plans were embittered, and she thought with disgust of Sir James's conceiving that she recognised him as her lover. There was vexation too on account of Celia.

"How could he expect it?" she burst forth in her most impetuous manner. "I have never agreed with him about anything but the cottages: I was barely polite to him before."

"But you have been so pleased with him since then; he has begun to feel quite sure that you are fond of him."

"Fond of him, Celia! How can you choose such odious expressions?" said Dorothea, passionately.

"Dear me, Dorothea, I suppose it would be right for you to be fond of a man whom you accepted for a husband."

"It is offensive to me to say that Sir James could think I was fond of him. Besides, it is not the right word for the feeling I must have towards the man I would accept as a husband."

"Well, I am sorry for Sir James. I thought it right to tell you, because you went on as you always do, never looking just where you are, and treading in the wrong place. You always see what nobody else sees; it is impossible to satisfy you; yet you never see what is quite plain. That's your way, Dodo." Something certainly gave Celia unusual courage; and she was not sparing the sister of whom she was occasionally in awe. Who can tell what just criticisms Murr the Cat may be passing on us beings of wider speculation?

"It is very painful," said Dorothea, feeling scourged. "I can have no more to do with the cottages. I must be uncivil to him. I must tell him I will have nothing to do with them. It is very painful." Her eyes filled again with tears.

"Wait a little. Think about it. You know he is going away for a day or two to see his sister. There will be nobody besides Lovegood." Celia could not help relenting. "Poor Dodo," she went on, in an amiable staccato. "It is very hard: it is your favourite *fad* to draw plans."

"*Fad* to draw plans! Do you think I only care about my fellow-creatures' houses in that childish way? I may well make mistakes. How can one ever do anything nobly Christian, living among people with such petty thoughts?"

No more was said: Dorothea was too much jarred to recover her temper and behave so as to show that she admitted any error in herself. She was disposed rather to accuse the intolerable narrowness and the purblind conscience of the society around her: and Celia was no longer the eternal cherub, but a thorn in her spirit, a pink-and-white nullifidian, worse than any discouraging presence in the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' The *fad* of drawing plans! What was life worth—what great faith was possible when the whole effect of one's actions could be withered up into such parched rubbish as that? When she got out of the carriage, her cheeks were pale and her eyelids red. She was an image of sorrow, and her uncle, who met her in the hall, would have been alarmed, if Celia had not been close to her looking so pretty and composed, that he at once concluded Dorothea's tears to have their origin in her excessive religiousness. He had returned, during their absence, from a journey to the county town, about a petition for the pardon of some criminal.

"Well, my dears," he said, kindly, as they went up to kiss him, "I hope nothing disagreeable has happened while I have been away."

"No, uncle," said Celia, "we have been to Freshitt to look at the cottages. We thought you would have been at home to lunch."

"I came by Lowick to lunch—you didn't know I came by Lowick. And I have brought a couple of pamphlets for you, Dorothea—in the library, you know; they lie on the table in the library."

It seemed as if an electric stream went through Dorothea, thrilling her from despair into expectation. They were pamphlets about the early Church. The oppression of Celia, Tantripp, and Sir James was shaken off, and she walked straight to the library. Celia went upstairs. Mr. Brooke was detained by a message, but when he re-entered the library, he found Dorothea seated and already deep in one of the pamphlets, which had some marginal manuscript of Mr. Casaubon's,—taking it in as eagerly as she might have taken in the scent of a fresh bouquet after a dry, hot, dreary walk.

She was getting away from Tipton and Freshitt, and her own sad liability to tread in the wrong places on her way to the New Jerusalem.

Mr. Brooke sat down in his arm-chair, stretched his legs towards the wood-fire, which had fallen into a wondrous mass of glowing dice between the dogs, and rubbed his hands gently, looking very mildly towards Dorothea, but with a neutral leisurely air, as if he had nothing particular to say. Dorothea closed her pamphlet, as soon as she was aware of her uncle's presence, and rose as if to go. Usually she would have been interested about her uncle's merciful errand on behalf of the criminal, but her late agitation had made her absent-minded.

"I came back by Lowick, you know," said Mr. Brooke, not as if with any intention to arrest her departure, but apparently from his usual tendency to say what he had said before. This fundamental principle of human speech was markedly exhibited in Mr. Brooke. "I lunched there and saw Casaubon's library, and that kind of thing. There's a sharp air, driving. Won't you sit down, my dear? You look cold."

Dorothea felt quite inclined to accept the invitation. Sometimes, when her uncle's easy way of taking things did not happen to be exasperating, it was rather soothing. She threw off her mantle and bonnet, and sat down opposite to him, enjoying the glow, but lifting up her beautiful hands for a screen. They were not thin hands, or small hands; but powerful, feminine, maternal hands. She seemed to be holding them up in propitiation for her passionate desire to know and to think, which in the unfriendly mediums of Tipton and Freshitt had issued in crying and red eyelids.

She bethought herself now of the condemned criminal. "What news have you brought about the sheep-stealer, uncle?"

"What, poor Bunch?—well, it seems we can't get him off—he is to be hanged."

Dorothea's brow took an expression of reprobation and pity.

"Hanged, you know," said Mr. Brooke, with a quiet nod. "Poor Romilly! he would have helped us. I knew Romilly.

Casaubon didn't know Romilly. He is a little buried in books, you know, Casaubon is."

"When a man has great studies and is writing a great work, he must of course give up seeing much of the world. How can he go about making acquaintances?"

"That's true. But a man mopes, you know. I have always been a bachelor too, but I have that sort of disposition that I never moped; it was my way to go about everywhere and take in everything. I never moped: but I can see that Casaubon does, you know. He wants a companion—a companion, you know."

"It would be a great honour to any one to be his companion," said Dorothea, energetically.

"You like him, eh?" said Mr. Brooke, without showing any surprise, or other emotion. "Well, now, I've known Casaubon ten years, ever since he came to Lowick. But I never got anything out of him—any ideas, you know. However, he is a tiptop man and may be a bishop—that kind of thing, you know, if Peel stays in. And he has a very high opinion of you, my dear."

Dorothea could not speak.

"The fact is, he has a very high opinion indeed of you. And he speaks uncommonly well—does Casaubon. He has deferred to me, you not being of age. In short, I have promised to speak to you, though I told him I thought there was not much chance. I was bound to tell him that. I said, my niece is very young, and that kind of thing. But I didn't think it necessary to go into everything. However, the long and the short of it is, that he has asked my permission to make you an offer of marriage—of marriage, you know," said Mr. Brooke, with his explanatory nod. "I thought it better to tell you, my dear."

No one could have detected any anxiety in Mr. Brooke's manner, but he did really wish to know something of his niece's mind, that, if there were any need for advice, he might give it in time. What feeling he, as a magistrate who had taken in so many ideas, could make room for, was unmixedly kind. Since Dorothea did not speak immediately, he repeated, "I thought it better to tell you, my dear."

"Thank you, uncle," said Dorothea, in a clear unwavering tone. "I am very grateful to Mr. Casaubon. If he makes me an offer, I shall accept him. I admire and honour him more than any man I ever saw."

Mr. Brooke paused a little, and then said in a lingering low tone, "Ah? . . . Well! He is a good match in some respects But now, Chettam is a good match. And our land lies together. I shall never interfere against your wishes, my dear. People should have their own way in marriage, and that sort of thing—up to a certain point, you know. I have always said that, up to a certain point. I wish you to marry well; and I have good reason to believe that Chettam wishes to marry you. I mention it, you know."

"It is impossible that I should ever marry Sir James Chettam," said Dorothea. "If he thinks of marrying me, he has made a great mistake."

"That is it, you see. One never knows. I should have thought Chettam was just the sort of man a woman would like, now."

"Pray do not mention him in that light again, uncle," said Dorothea, feeling some of her late irritation revive.

Mr. Brooke wondered, and felt that women were an inexhaustible subject of study, since even he at his age was not in a perfect state of scientific prediction about them! Here was a fellow like Chettam with no chance at all.

"Well, but Casaubon, now. There is no hurry—I mean for you. It's true, every year will tell upon him. He is over five-and-forty, you know. I should say a good seven-and-twenty years older than you. To be sure,—if you like learning and standing, and that sort of thing, we can't have everything. And his income is good—he has a handsome property independent of the Church—his income is good. Still he is not young, and I must not conceal from you, my dear, that I think his health is not over-strong. I know nothing else against him."

"I should not wish to have a husband very near my own age," said Dorothea, with grave decision. "I should wish to have a husband who was above me in judgment and in all knowledge."

Mr. Brooke repeated his subdued, "Ah?—I thought you had more of your own opinion than most girls. I thought you liked your own opinion—liked it, you know."

"I cannot imagine myself living without some opinions, but I should wish to have good reasons for them, and a wise man could help me to see which opinions had the best foundation, and would help me to live according to them."

"Very true. You couldn't put the thing better—couldn't put it better, beforehand, you know. But there are oddities in things," continued Mr. Brooke, whose conscience was really roused to do the best he could for his niece on this occasion.

"Life isn't cast in a mould—not cut out by rule and line, and that sort of thing. I never married myself, and it will be the better for you and yours. The fact is, I never loved any one well enough to put myself into a noose for them. It *is* a noose, you know. Temper, now. There is temper. And a husband likes to be master."

"I know that I must expect trials, uncle. Marriage is a state of higher duties. I never thought of it as mere personal ease," said poor Dorothea.

"Well, you are not fond of show, a great establishment, balls, dinners, that kind of thing. I can see that Casaubon's ways might suit you better than Chettam's. And you shall do as you like, my dear. I would not hinder Casaubon; I said so at once; for there is no knowing how anything may turn out. You have not the same tastes as every young lady; and a clergyman and scholar—who may be a bishop—that kind of thing—may suit you better than Chettam. Chettam is a good fellow, a good sound-hearted fellow, you know; but he doesn't go much into ideas. I did, when I was his age. But Casaubon's eyes, now. I think he has hurt them a little with too much reading."

"I should be all the happier, uncle, the more room there was for me to help him," said Dorothea, ardently.

"You have quite made up your mind, I see. Well, my dear, the fact is, I have a letter for you in my pocket." Mr. Brooke handed the letter to Dorothea, but as she rose to go away, he added, "There is not too much hurry, my dear. Think about it, you know."

When Dorothea had left him, he reflected that he had certainly spoken strongly: he had put the risks of marriage before her in a striking manner. It was his duty to do so. But as to pretending to be wise for young people,—no uncle, however much he had travelled in his youth, absorbed the new ideas, and dined with celebrities now deceased, could pretend to judge what sort of marriage would turn out well for a young girl who preferred Casaubon to Chettam. In short, woman was a problem which, since Mr. Brooke's mind felt blank before it, could be hardly less complicated than the revolutions of an irregular solid.

CHAPTER V

"Hard students are commonly troubled with gowts, catarrhs, rheums, cachexia, bradypepsia, bad eyes, stone, and collick, crudities, oppilations, vertigo, winds, consumptions, and all such diseases as come by over-much sitting: they are most part lean, dry, ill-coloured . . . and all through immoderate pains and extraordinary studies. If you will not believe the truth of this, look upon great Tostatus and Thomas Aquainas' works; and tell me whether those men took pains."—BURTON's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, P. I. s. 2.

THIS was Mr. Casaubon's letter:

MY DEAR MISS BROOKE,—I have your guardian's permission to address you on a subject than which I have none more at heart. I am not, I trust, mistaken in the recognition of some deeper correspondence than that of date in the fact that a consciousness of need in my own life had arisen contemporaneously with the possibility of my becoming acquainted with you. For in the first hour of meeting you, I had an impression of your eminent and perhaps exclusive fitness to supply that need (connected, I may say, with such activity of the affections as even the preoccupations of a work too special to be abdicated could not uninterruptedly dissimulate); and each succeeding opportunity for observation has given the impression an added depth by convincing me more emphatically of that fitness which I had preconceived, and thus evoking more decisively those affections to which I have but now referred. Our conversations have, I think, made sufficiently clear to you the tenor of my life and purposes: a tenor unsuited, I am aware, to the commoner order of minds. But I have discerned in you an elevation of thought and a capability of devotedness, which I had hitherto not conceived to be compatible either with the early bloom of youth or with those graces of sex that may be said at once to win and to confer distinction when combined, as they notably are in you, with the mental qualities above indicated. It was, I confess, beyond my hope to meet with this rare combination of elements both solid and attractive, adapted to supply aid in graver labours and to cast a charm over vacant hours; and but for the event of my introduction to you (which, let me again say, I trust not to be superficially coincident with foreshadowing needs, but providentially related thereto as stages towards the completion of a life's plan), I should presumably have gone on to the last without any attempt to lighten my solitariness by a matrimonial union.

Such, my dear Miss Brooke, is the accurate statement of my feelings; and I rely on your kind indulgence in venturing now to ask you how far your own are of a nature to confirm my happy presentiment. To be accepted by you as your husband and the earthly guardian of your welfare, I should regard as the highest of providential gifts. In return I can at least offer you an affection hitherto unwasted, and the faithful consecration of a life which, however short in the sequel, has no backward pages whereon, if you choose to turn them, you will find records such as might justly cause you either bitterness or shame. I await the expression of your sentiments with an anxiety which it would be the part of wisdom (were it possible) to divert by a more arduous labour than usual. But in this order of experience I am still young, and in looking forward to an unfavourable possibility I cannot but feel that resignation to solitude will be more difficult after the temporary illumination of hope. In any case, I shall remain, yours with sincere devotion,

EDWARD CASAUBON.

Dorothea trembled while she read this letter; then she fell on her knees, buried her face, and sobbed. She could not pray; under the rush of solemn emotion in which thoughts became vague and images floated uncertainly, she could but cast herself, with a childlike sense of reclining, in the lap of a divine consciousness which sustained her own. She remained in that attitude till it was time to dress for dinner.

How could it occur to her to examine the letter, to look at it critically as a profession of love? Her whole soul was possessed by the fact that a fuller life was opening before her: she was a neophyte about to enter on a higher grade of initiation. She was going to have room for the energies which stirred uneasily under the dimness and pressure of her own ignorance and the petty peremptoriness of the world's habits.

Now she would be able to devote herself to large yet definite duties; now she would be allowed to live continually in the light of a mind that she could reverence. This hope was not unmixed with the glow of proud delight—the joyous maiden surprise that she was chosen by the man whom her admiration had chosen. All Dorothea's passion was transfused through a mind struggling towards an ideal life; the radiance of her transfigured girlhood fell on the first object that came within its level. The impetus with which inclination became resolution was heightened by those little events of the day which had roused her discontent with the actual conditions of her life.

After dinner, when Celia was playing an "air, with variations," a small kind of tinkling which symbolised the æsthetic part of the young ladies' education, Dorothea went up to her room to answer Mr. Casaubon's letter. Why should she defer the answer? She wrote it over three times, not because she wished to change the wording, but because her hand was unusually uncertain, and she could not bear that Mr. Casaubon should think her handwriting bad and illegible. She piqued herself on writing a hand in which each letter was distinguishable without any large range of conjecture, and she meant to make much use of this accomplishment, to save Mr. Casaubon's eyes. Three times she wrote.

My dear Mr. Casaubon,—I am very grateful to you for loving me, and thinking me worthy to be your wife. I can look forward to no better happiness than that which would be one with yours. If I said more, it would only be the same thing written out at greater length, for I cannot now dwell on any other thought than that I may be through life, yours devotedly,

Dorothea Brooke.

Later in the evening she followed her uncle into the library to give him the letter, that he might send it in the morning. He was surprised, but his surprise only issued in a few moments' silence, during which he pushed about various objects on his writing-table, and finally stood with his back to the fire, his glasses on his nose, looking at the address of Dorothea's letter.

"Have you thought enough about this, my dear?" he said at last.

"There was no need to think long, uncle. I know of nothing to make me vacillate. If I changed my mind, it must be because of something important and entirely new to me."

"Ah!—then you have accepted him? Then Chettam has no chance? Has Chettam offended you—offended you, you know? What is it you don't like in Chettam?"

"There is nothing that I like in him," said Dorothea, rather impetuously.

Mr. Brooke threw his head and shoulders backward as if some one had thrown a light missile at him. Dorothea immediately felt some self-rebuke, and said—

"I mean in the light of a husband. He is very kind, I think—really very good about the cottages. A well-meaning man."

"But you must have a scholar, and that sort of thing?

Well, it lies a little in our family. I had it myself—that love of knowledge, and going into everything—a little too much—it took me too far; though that sort of thing doesn't often run in the female line; or it runs underground like the rivers in Greece, you know—it comes out in the sons. Clever sons, clever mothers. I went a good deal into that, at one time. However, my dear, I have always said that people should do as they like in these things, up to a certain point. I couldn't, as your guardian, have consented to a bad match. But Casaubon stands well: his position is good. I am afraid Chettam will be hurt, though, and Mrs. Cadwallader will blame me."

That evening, of course, Celia knew nothing of what had happened. She attributed Dorothea's abstracted manner, and the evidence of further crying since they had got home, to the temper she had been in about Sir James Chettam and the buildings, and was careful not to give further offence: having once said what she wanted to say, Celia had no disposition to recur to disagreeable subjects. It had been her nature when a child never to quarrel with anyone—only to observe with wonder that they quarrelled with her, and looked like turkey-cocks; whereupon she was ready to play at cat's cradle with them whenever they recovered themselves. And as to Dorothea, it had always been her way to find something wrong in her sister's words, though Celia inwardly protested that she always said just how things were, and nothing else: she never did and never could put words together out of her own head. But the best of Dodo was, that she did not keep angry for long together. Now, though they had hardly spoken to each other all the evening, yet when Celia put by her work, intending to go to bed, a proceeding in which she was always much the earlier, Dorothea, who was seated on a low stool, unable to occupy herself except in meditation, said, with the musical intonation which in moments of deep but quiet feeling made her speech like a fine bit of recitative—

"Celia, dear, come and kiss me," holding her arms open as she spoke.

Celia knelt down to get the right level and gave her little butterfly kiss, while Dorothea encircled her with gentle arms and pressed her lips gravely on each cheek in turn.

"Don't sit up, Dodo, you are so pale to-night: go to bed soon," said Celia, in a comfortable way, without any touch of pathos.

"No, dear, I am very, very happy," said Dorothea fervently.

"So much the better," thought Celia. "But how strangely Dodo goes from one extreme to the other."

The next day, at luncheon, the butler, handing something to Mr. Brooke, said, "Jonas is come back, sir, and has brought this letter."

Mr. Brooke read the letter, and then, nodding toward Dorothea, said, "Casaubon, my dear: he will be here to dinner; he didn't wait to write more—didn't wait, you know."

It could not seem remarkable to Celia that a dinner guest should be announced to her sister beforehand, but, her eyes following the same direction as her uncle's, she was struck with the peculiar effect of the announcement on Dorothea. It seemed as if something like the reflection of a white sunlit wing had passed across her features, ending in one of her rare blushes. For the first time it entered into Celia's mind that there might be something more between Mr. Casaubon and her sister than his delight in bookish talk and her delight in listening. Hitherto she had classed the admiration for this "ugly" and learned acquaintance with the admiration for Monsieur Liret at Lausanne, also ugly and learned. Dorothea had never been tired of listening to old Monsieur Liret when Celia's feet were as cold as possible, and when it had really become dreadful to see the skin of his bald head moving about. Why then should her enthusiasm not extend to Mr. Casaubon simply in the same way as to Monsieur Liret? And it seemed probable that all learned men had a sort of schoolmaster's view of young people.

But now Celia was really startled at the suspicion which had darted into her mind. She was seldom taken by surprise in this way, her marvellous quickness in observing a certain order of signs generally preparing her to expect such outward events as she had an interest in. Not that she now imagined Mr. Casaubon to be already an accepted lover: she had only begun to feel disgust at the possibility that anything in Dorothea's mind could tend towards such an issue. Here was something really to vex her about Dodo: it was all very well not to accept Sir James Chettam, but the idea of marrying Mr. Casaubon! Celia felt a sort of shame mingled with a sense of the ludicrous. But perhaps Dodo, if she were really bordering on such an extravagance, might be turned away from it: experience had often shown that her impressibility might be calculated on. The day was damp, and they were not going to walk out, so they both went up to their sitting-room; and there Celia observed that Dorothea, instead of settling down with her usual diligent interest to some occupation, simply leaned her elbow on an open book and looked out of the window at the great cedar silvered with the damp. She herself had taken up the making of a toy for the curate's children, and was not going to enter on any subject too precipitately.

Dorothea was in fact thinking that it was desirable for Celia to know of the momentous change in Mr. Casaubon's position since he had last been in the house: it did not seem fair to leave her in ignorance of what would necessarily affect her attitude towards him; but it was impossible not to shrink from telling her. Dorothea accused herself of some meanness in this timidity: it was always odious to her to have any small fears or contrivances about her actions, but at this moment she was seeking the highest aid possible that she might not dread the corrosiveness of Celia's pretty carnally-minded prose. Her reverie was broken, and the difficulty of decision banished, by Celia's small and rather guttural voice speaking in its usual tone, of a remark aside or a "by the by."

"Is any one else coming to dine besides Mr. Casaubon?"

"Not that I know of."

"I hope there is some one else. Then I shall not hear him eat his soup so."

"What is there remarkable about his soup-eating?"

"Really, Dodo, can't you hear how he scrapes his spoon? And he always blinks before he speaks. I don't know whether Locke blinked, but I'm sure I am sorry for those who sat opposite to him, if he did."

"Celia," said Dorothea, with emphatic gravity, "pray don't make any more observations of that kind."

"Why not? They are quite true," returned Celia, who had her reasons for persevering, though she was beginning to be a little afraid.

"Many things are true which only the commonest minds observe."

"Then I think the commonest minds must be rather useful. I think it is a pity Mr. Casaubon's mother had not a commoner mind: she might have taught him better." Celia was inwardly frightened, and ready to run away, now she had hurled this light javelin.

Dorothea's feelings had gathered to an avalanche, and there could be no further preparation.

"It is right to tell you, Celia, that I am engaged to marry Mr. Casaubon."

Perhaps Celia had never turned so pale before. The paper man she was making would have had his leg injured, but for her habitual care of whatever she held in her hands. She laid the fragile figure down at once, and sat perfectly still for a few moments. When she spoke there was a tear gathering.

"O Dodo, I hope you will be happy." Her sisterly tenderness could not but surmount other feelings at this moment, and her fears were the fears of affection.

Dorothea was still hurt and agitated.

"It is quite decided, then?" said Celia, in an awed undertone. "And uncle knows?"

"I have accepted Mr. Casaubon's offer. My uncle brought me the letter that contained it; he knew about it beforehand."

"I beg your pardon, if I have said anything to hurt you, Dodo," said Celia, with a slight sob. She never could have thought that she should feel as she did. There was something funereal in the whole affair, and Mr. Casaubon seemed to be the officiating clergyman, about whom it would be indecent to make remarks.

"Never mind, Kitty, do not grieve. We should never admire the same people. I often offend in something of the same way; I am apt to speak too strongly of those who don't please me."

In spite of this magnanimity Dorothea was still smarting: perhaps as much from Celia's subdued astonishment as from her small criticisms. Of course all the world round Tipton would be out of sympathy with this marriage. Dorothea knew of no one who thought as she did about life and its best objects.

Nevertheless before the evening was at an end she was very happy. In an hour's *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Casaubon she talked to him with more freedom than she had ever felt before, even pouring out her joy at the thought of devoting herself to him, and of learning how she might best share and further all his great ends. Mr. Casaubon was touched with an unknown delight (what man would not have been?) at this childlike unrestrained ardour: he was not surprised (what lover would have been?) that he should be the object of it.

"My dear young lady—Miss Brooke—Dorothea!" he said, pressing her hand between his hands, "this is a happiness greater than I had ever imagined to be in reserve for me. That I should ever meet with a mind and person so rich in the mingled graces which could render marriage desirable, was far indeed from my conception. You have all—nay, more than all—those qualities which I have ever regarded as the characteristic excellences of womanhood. The great charm of your sex is its capability of an ardent self-sacrificing affection, and herein we see its fitness to round and complete the existence of our own. Hitherto I have known few pleasures save of the severer kind: my satisfactions have been those of the solitary student. I have been little disposed to gather flowers that would wither in my hand, but now I shall pluck them with eagerness, to place them in your bosom."

No speech could have been more thoroughly honest in its intention: the frigid rhetoric at the end was as sincere as the bark of a dog, or the cawing of an amorous rook. Would it not be rash to conclude that there was no passion behind those sonnets to Delia which strike us as the thin music of a mandolin?

Dorothea's faith supplied all that Mr. Casaubon's words seemed to leave unsaid: what believer sees a disturbing omission or infelicity? The text, whether of prophet or of poet, expands for whatever we can put into it, and even his bad grammar is sublime.

"I am very ignorant—you will quite wonder at my ignorance," said Dorothea. "I have so many thoughts that may be quite mistaken; and now I shall be able to tell them all to you, and ask you about them. But," she added, with rapid imagination of Mr. Casaubon's probable feeling, "I will not trouble you too much; only when you are inclined to listen to me. You must often be weary with the pursuit of subjects in your own track. I shall gain enough if you will take me with you there."

"How should I be able now to persevere in any path without your companionship?" said Mr. Casaubon, kissing her candid brow, and feeling that heaven had vouchsafed him a blessing in every way suited to his peculiar wants. He was being unconsciously wrought upon by the charms of a nature which was entirely without hidden calculations either for immediate effects or for remoter ends. It was this which made Dorothea so childlike, and, according to some judges, so stupid, with all her reputed cleverness; as, for example, in the present case of throwing herself, metaphorically speaking, at Mr. Casaubon's feet, and kissing his unfashionable shoe-ties as if he were a Protestant Pope. She was not in the least teaching Mr. Casaubon to ask if he were good enough for her, but merely asking herself anxiously how she could be good enough for Mr. Casaubon. Before he left the next day it had been decided that the marriage should take place within six weeks. Why not? Mr. Casaubon's house was ready. It was not a parsonage, but a considerable mansion, with much land attached to it. The parsonage was inhabited by the curate, who did all the duty except preaching the morning sermon.

CHAPTER VI

> " My lady's tongue is like the meadow blades,
> That cut you stroking them with idle hand.
> Nice cutting is her function : she divides
> With spiritual edge the millet-seed,
> And makes intangible savings."

As Mr. Casaubon's carriage was passing out of the gateway, it arrested the entrance of a pony phaeton driven by a lady with a servant seated behind. It was doubtful whether the recognition had been mutual, for Mr. Casaubon was looking absently before him ; but the lady was quick-eyed, and threw a nod and a " how do you do ? " in the nick of time. In spite of her shabby bonnet and very old Indian shawl, it was plain that the lodge-keeper regarded her as an important personage, from the low curtsy which was dropped on the entrance of the small phaeton.

" Well, Mrs. Fitchett, how are your fowls laying now ? " said the high-coloured, dark-eyed lady, with the clearest chiselled utterance.

" Pretty well for laying, madam, but they've ta'en to eating their eggs : I've no peace o' mind with 'em at all."

" O the cannibals ! Better sell them cheap at once. What will you sell them a couple ? One can't eat fowls of a bad character at a high price."

" Well, madam, half-a-crown : I couldn't let 'em go, not under."

" Half-a-crown, these times ! Come now—for the Rector's chicken-broth on a Sunday. He has consumed all ours that I can spare. You are half paid with the sermon, Mrs. Fitchett, remember that. Take a pair of tumbler-pigeons for them—little beauties. You must come and see them. You have no tumblers among your pigeons."

" Well, madam, Master Fitchett shall go and see 'em after work. He's very hot on new sorts : to oblige *you*."

" Oblige me ! It will be the best bargain he ever made. A pair of church pigeons for a couple of wicked Spanish fowls that eat their own eggs ! Don't you and Fitchett boast too much, that is all ! "

The phaeton was driven onwards with the last words, leaving

Mrs. Fitchett laughing and shaking her head slowly, with an interjectional "Sure*ly*, sure*ly*!"—from which it might be inferred that she would have found the country-side somewhat duller if the Rector's lady had been less free-spoken and less of a skinflint. Indeed, both the farmers and labourers in the parishes of Freshitt and Tipton would have felt a sad lack of conversation but for the stories about what Mrs. Cadwallader said and did: a lady of immeasurably high birth, descended, as it were, from unknown earls, dim as the crowd of heroic shades—who pleaded poverty, pared down prices, and cut jokes in the most companionable manner, though with a turn of tongue that let you know who she was. Such a lady gave a neighbourliness to both rank and religion, and mitigated the bitterness of uncommuted tithe. A much more exemplary character with an infusion of sour dignity would not have furthered their comprehension of the Thirty-nine Articles, and would have been less socially uniting.

Mr. Brooke, seeing Mrs. Cadwallader's merits from a different point of view, winced a little when her name was announced in the library, where he was sitting alone.

"I see you have had our Lowick Cicero here," she said, seating herself comfortably, throwing back her wraps, and showing a thin but well-built figure. "I suspect you and he are brewing some bad politics, else you would not be seeing so much of the lively man. I shall inform against you: remember you are both suspicious characters since you took Peel's side about the Catholic Bill. I shall tell everybody that you are going to put up for Middlemarch on the Whig side when old Pinkerton resigns, and that Casaubon is going to help you in an underhand manner: going to bribe the voters with pamphlets, and throw open the public-houses to distribute them. Come, confess!"

"Nothing of the sort," said Mr. Brooke, smiling and rubbing his eye-glasses, but really blushing a little at the impeachment. "Casaubon and I don't talk politics much. He doesn't care much about the philanthropic side of things; punishments, and that kind of thing. He only cares about Church questions. That is not my line of action, you know."

"Ra-a-ther too much, my friend. *I* have heard of your doings. Who was it that sold his bit of land to the Papists at Middlemarch? I believe you bought it on purpose. You are a perfect Guy Faux. See if you are not burnt in effigy this 5th of November coming. Humphrey would not come to quarrel with you about it, so I am come."

"Very good. I was prepared to be persecuted for not persecuting—not persecuting, you know."

"There you go! That is a piece of clap-trap you have got ready for the hustings. Now, *do not* let them lure you to the hustings, my dear Mr. Brooke. A man always makes a fool of himself, speechifying: there's no excuse but being on the right side, so that you can ask a blessing on your humming and hawing. You will lose yourself, I forewarn you. You will make a Saturday pie of all parties' opinions, and be pelted by everybody."

"That is what I expect, you know," said Mr. Brooke, not wishing to betray how little he enjoyed this prophetic sketch—"what I expect as an independent man. As to the Whigs, a man who goes with the thinkers is not likely to be hooked on by any party. He may go with them up to a certain point—up to a certain point, you know. But that is what you ladies never understand."

"Where your certain point is? No. I should like to be told how a man can have any certain point when he belongs to no party—leading a roving life, and never letting his friends know his address. 'Nobody knows where Brooke will be—there's no counting on Brooke'—that is what people say of you, to be quite frank. Now, do turn respectable. How will you like going to Sessions with everybody looking shy on you, and you with a bad conscience and an empty pocket?"

"I don't pretend to argue with a lady on politics," said Mr. Brooke, with an air of smiling indifference, but feeling rather unpleasantly conscious that this attack of Mrs. Cadwallader's had opened the defensive campaign to which certain rash steps had exposed him. "Your sex are not thinkers, you know—*varium et mutabile semper*—that kind of thing. You don't know Virgil. I knew"—Mr. Brooke reflected in time that he had not had the personal acquaintance of the Augustan poet—"I was going to say, poor Stoddart, you know. That was what *he* said. You ladies are always against an independent attitude—a man's caring for nothing but truth, and that sort of thing. And there is no part of the county where opinion is narrower than it is here—I don't mean to throw stones, you know, but somebody is wanted to take the independent line; and if I don't take it, who will?"

"Who? Why, any upstart who has got neither blood nor position. People of standing should consume their independent nonsense at home, not hawk it about. And you! who are going to marry your niece, as good as your daughter, to one of our best men. Sir James would be cruelly annoyed: it will be too hard on him if you turn round now and make yourself a Whig sign-board."

Mr. Brooke again winced inwardly, for Dorothea's engagement had no sooner been decided, than he had thought of Mrs. Cadwallader's prospective taunts. It might have been easy for ignorant observers to say, "Quarrel with Mrs. Cadwallader"; but where is a country gentleman to go who quarrels with his oldest neighbours? Who could taste the fine flavour in the name of Brooke if it were delivered casually, like wine without a seal? Certainly a man can only be cosmopolitan up to a certain point.

"I hope Chettam and I shall always be good friends; but I am sorry to say there is no prospect of his marrying my niece," said Mr. Brooke, much relieved to see through the window that Celia was coming in.

"Why not?" said Mrs. Cadwallader, with a sharp note of surprise. "It is hardly a fortnight since you and I were talking about it."

"My niece has chosen another suitor—has chosen him, you know. I have had nothing to do with it. I should have preferred Chettam; and I should have said Chettam was the man any girl would have chosen. But there is no accounting for these things. Your sex is capricious, you know."

"Why, whom do you mean to say that you are going to let her marry?" Mrs. Cadwallader's mind was rapidly surveying the possibilities of choice for Dorothea.

But here Celia entered, blooming from a walk in the garden, and the greeting with her delivered Mr. Brooke from the necessity of answering immediately. He got up hastily, and saying, "By the way, I must speak to Wright about the horses," shuffled quickly out of the room.

"My dear child, what is this?—this about your sister's engagement?" said Mrs. Cadwallader.

"She is engaged to marry Mr. Casaubon," said Celia, resorting, as usual, to the simplest statement of fact, and enjoying this opportunity of speaking to the Rector's wife alone.

"This is frightful. How long has it been going on?"

"I only knew of it yesterday. They are to be married in six weeks."

"Well, my dear, I wish you joy of your brother-in-law."

"I am so sorry for Dorothea."

"Sorry! It is her doing, I suppose."

"Yes; she says Mr. Casaubon has a great soul."

"With all my heart."

"O Mrs. Cadwallader, I don't think it can be nice to marry a man with a great soul."

"Well, my dear, take warning. You know the look of one now; when the next comes and wants to marry you, don't you accept him."

"I'm sure I never should."

"No; one such in a family is enough. So your sister never cared about Sir James Chettam? What would you have said to *him* for a brother-in-law?"

"I should have liked that very much. I am sure he would have been a good husband. Only," Celia added, with a slight blush (she sometimes seemed to blush as she breathed), "I don't think he would have suited Dorothea."

"Not high-flown enough?"

"Dodo is very strict. She thinks so much about everything, and is so particular about what one says. Sir James never seemed to please her."

"She must have encouraged him, I am sure. That is not very creditable."

"Please don't be angry with Dodo; she does not see things. She thought so much about the cottages, and she *was* rude to Sir James sometimes; but he is so kind, he never noticed it."

"Well," said Mrs. Cadwallader, putting on her shawl, and rising, as if in haste, "I must go straight to Sir James and break this to him. He will have brought his mother back by this time, and I must call. Your uncle will never tell him. We are all disappointed, my dear. Young people should think of their families in marrying. I set a bad example—married a poor clergyman, and made myself a pitiable object among the De Bracys—obliged to get my coals by stratagem, and pray to heaven for my salad oil. However, Casaubon has money enough; I must do him that justice. As to his blood, I suppose the family quarterings are three cuttle-fish sable, and a commentator rampant. By the by, before I go, my dear, I must speak to your Mrs. Carter about pastry. I want to send my young cook to learn of her. Poor people with four children, like us, you know, can't afford to keep a good cook. I have no doubt Mrs. Carter will oblige me. Sir James's cook is a perfect dragon."

In less than an hour, Mrs. Cadwallader had circumvented

Mrs. Carter and driven to Freshitt Hall, which was not far from her own parsonage, her husband being resident in Freshitt and keeping a curate in Tipton.

Sir James Chettam had returned from the short journey which had kept him absent for a couple of days, and had changed his dress, intending to ride over to Tipton Grange. His horse was standing at the door when Mrs. Cadwallader drove up, and he immediately appeared there himself, whip in hand. Lady Chettam had not yet returned, but Mrs. Cadwallader's errand could not be despatched in the presence of grooms, so she asked to be taken into the conservatory close by, to look at the new plants; and on coming to a contemplative stand, she said—

"I have a great shock for you; I hope you are not so far gone in love as you pretended to be."

It was of no use protesting against Mrs. Cadwallader's way of putting things. But Sir James's countenance changed a little. He felt a vague alarm.

"I do believe Brooke is going to expose himself after all. I accused him of meaning to stand for Middlemarch on the Liberal side, and he looked silly and never denied it—talked about the independent line, and the usual nonsense."

"Is that all?" said Sir James, much relieved.

"Why," rejoined Mrs. Cadwallader, with a sharper note, "you don't mean to say that you would like him to turn public man in that way—making a sort of political Cheap Jack of himself?"

"He might be dissuaded, I should think. He would not like the expense."

"That is what I told him. He is vulnerable to reason there—always a few grains of common-sense in an ounce of miserliness. Miserliness is a capital quality to run in families; it's the safe side for madness to dip on. And there must be a little crack in the Brooke family, else we should not see what we are to see."

"What? Brooke standing for Middlemarch?"

"Worse than that. I really feel a little responsible. I always told you Miss Brooke would be such a fine match. I knew there was a great deal of nonsense in her—a flighty sort of Methodistical stuff. But these things wear out of girls. However, I am taken by surprise for once."

"What do you mean, Mrs. Cadwallader?" said Sir James. His fear lest Miss Brooke should have run away to join the Moravian Brethren, or some preposterous sect unknown to good society, was a little allayed by the knowledge that Mrs. Cadwallader always made the worst of things. "What has happened to Miss Brooke? Pray speak out."

"Very well. She is engaged to be married." Mrs. Cadwallader paused a few moments, observing the deeply-hurt expression in her friend's face, which he was trying to conceal by a nervous smile, while he whipped his boot; but she soon added, "Engaged to Casaubon."

Sir James let his whip fall and stooped to pick it up. Perhaps his face had never before gathered so much concentrated disgust as when he turned to Mrs. Cadwallader and repeated, "Casaubon?"

"Even so. You know my errand now."

"Good God! It is horrible! He is no better than a mummy!" (The point of view has to be allowed for, as that of a blooming and disappointed rival.)

"She says, he is a great soul.—A great bladder for dried peas to rattle in!" said Mrs. Cadwallader.

"What business has an old bachelor like that to marry?" said Sir James. "He has one foot in the grave."

"He means to draw it out again, I suppose."

"Brooke ought not to allow it: he should insist on its being put off till she is of age. She would think better of it then. What is a guardian for?"

"As if you could ever squeeze a resolution out of Brooke!"

"Cadwallader might talk to him."

"Not he! Humphrey finds everybody charming. I never can get him to abuse Casaubon. He will even speak well of the bishop, though I tell him it is unnatural in a beneficed clergyman: what can one do with a husband who attends so little to the decencies? I hide it as well as I can by abusing everybody myself. Come, come, cheer up! you are well rid of Miss Brooke, a girl who would have been requiring you to see the stars by daylight. Between ourselves, little Celia is worth two of her, and likely after all to be the better match. For this marriage to Casaubon is as good as going to a nunnery."

"Oh, on my own account—it is for Miss Brooke's sake I think her friends should try to use their influence."

"Well, Humphrey doesn't know yet. But when I tell him, you may depend on it he will say, 'Why not? Casaubon is a good fellow—and young—young enough.' These charitable people never know vinegar from wine till they have swallowed it and got the colic. However, if I were a man I should prefer Celia, especially when Dorothea was gone. The truth is, you have been courting one and have won the other. I can see that she admires you almost as much as a man expects to be admired. If it were any one but me who said so, you might think it exaggeration. Good-bye!"

Sir James handed Mrs. Cadwallader to the phaeton, and then jumped on his horse. He was not going to renounce his ride because of his friend's unpleasant news—only to ride the faster in some other direction than that of Tipton Grange.

Now, why on earth should Mrs. Cadwallader have been at all busy about Miss Brooke's marriage; and why, when one match that she liked to think she had a hand in was frustrated, should she have straightway contrived the preliminaries of another? Was there any ingenious plot, any hide-and-seek course of action, which might be detected by a careful telescopic watch? Not at all: a telescope might have swept the parishes of Tipton and Freshitt, the whole area visited by Mrs. Cadwallader in her phaeton, without witnessing any interview that could excite suspicion, or any scene from which she did not return with the same unperturbed keenness of eye and the same high natural colour. In fact, if that convenient vehicle had existed in the days of the Seven Sages, one of them would doubtless have remarked, that you can know little of women by following them about in their pony phaetons. Even with a microscope directed on a water-drop we find ourselves making interpretations which turn out to be rather coarse; for whereas under a weak lens you may seem to see a creature exhibiting an active voracity into which other smaller creatures actively play as if they were so many animated tax-pennies, a stronger lens reveals to you certain tiniest hairlets which make vortices for these victims while the swallower waits passively at his receipt of custom. In this way, metaphorically speaking, a strong lens applied to Mrs. Cadwallader's match-making will show a play of minute causes producing what may be called thought and speech vortices to bring her the sort of food she needed.

Her life was rurally simple, quite free from secrets either foul, dangerous, or otherwise important, and not consciously affected by the great affairs of the world. All the more did the affairs of the great world interest her, when communicated in the letters of high-born relations: the way in which fascinating younger sons had gone to the dogs by marrying their mistresses; the fine old-blooded idiocy of young Lord Tapir, and the furious gouty humours of old Lord Megatherium; the exact crossing of genealogies which had brought a coronet into a new branch and widened the relations of scandal,—these were topics of which she retained details with the utmost accuracy, and reproduced them in an excellent pickle of epigrams, which she herself enjoyed the more because she believed as unquestioningly in birth and no-birth as she did in game and vermin. She would never have disowned any one on the ground of poverty: a De Bracy reduced to take his dinner in a basin would have seemed to her an example of pathos worth exaggerating, and I fear his aristocratic vices would not have horrified her. But her feeling towards the vulgar rich was a sort of religious hatred: they had probably made all their money out of high retail prices, and Mrs. Cadwallader detested high prices for everything that was not paid in kind at the Rectory: such people were no part of God's design in making the world; and their accent was an affliction to the ears. A town where such monsters abounded was hardly more than a sort of low comedy, which could not be taken account of in a well-bred scheme of the universe. Let any lady who is inclined to be hard on Mrs. Cadwallader inquire into the comprehensiveness of her own beautiful views, and be quite sure that they afford accommodation for all the lives which have the honour to coexist with hers.

With such a mind, active as phosphorus, biting everything that came near into the form that suited it, how could Mrs. Cadwallader feel that the Miss Brookes and their matrimonial prospects were alien to her? especially as it had been the habit of years for her to scold Mr. Brooke with the friendliest frankness, and let him know in confidence that she thought him a poor creature. From the first arrival of the young ladies in Tipton she had prearranged Dorothea's marriage with Sir James, and if it had taken place would have been quite sure that it was her doing: that it should not take place after she had preconceived it, caused her an irritation which every thinker will sympathis with. She was the diplomatist of Tipton and Freshitt, and fo anything to happen in spite of her was an offensive irregularity As to freaks like this of Miss Brooke's, Mrs. Cadwallader had no patience with them, and now saw that her opinion of this girl had been infected with some of her husband's weak charitableness: those Methodistical whims, that air of being more religious than the rector and curate together, came from a deeper and more constitutional disease than she had been willing to believe.

"However," said Mrs. Cadwallader, first to herself and afterwards to her husband, "I throw her over: there was a chance, if she had married Sir James, of her becoming a sane, sensible woman. He would never have contradicted her, and when a woman is not contradicted, she has no motive for obstinacy in her absurdities. But now I wish her joy of her hair shirt."

It followed that Mrs. Cadwallader must decide on another match for Sir James, and having made up her mind that it was to be the younger Miss Brooke, there could not have been a more skilful move toward the success of her plan than her hint to the baronet that he had made an impression on Celia's heart. For he was not one of those gentlemen who languish after the unattainable Sappho's apple that laughs from the topmost bough—the charms which

> " Smile like the knot of cowslips on the cliff,
> Not to be come at by the willing hand."

He had no sonnets to write, and it could not strike him agreeably that he was not an object of preference to the woman whom he had preferred. Already the knowledge that Dorothea had chosen Mr. Casaubon had bruised his attachment and relaxed its hold. Although Sir James was a sportsman, he had some other feelings towards women than towards grouse and foxes, and did not regard his future wife in the light of prey, valuable chiefly for the excitements of the chase. Neither was he so well acquainted with the habits of primitive races as to feel that an ideal combat for her, tomahawk in hand, so to speak, was necessary to the historical continuity of the marriage-tie. On the contrary, having the amiable vanity which knits us to those who are fond of us, and disinclines us to those who are indifferent, and also a good grateful nature, the mere idea that a woman had a kindness towards him spun little threads of tenderness from out his heart towards hers.

Thus it happened, that after Sir James had ridden rather fast for half an hour in a direction away from Tipton Grange, he slackened his pace, and at last turned into a road which would lead him back by a shorter cut. Various feelings wrought in him the determination after all to go to the Grange to-day as if nothing new had happened. He could not help rejoicing that he had never made the offer and been rejected; mere friendly politeness required that he should call to see Dorothea about the cottages, and now happily Mrs. Cadwallader had prepared him to offer his congratulations, if necessary, without showing too much awkwardness. He really did not like it: giving up Dorothea was very painful to him; but there was something in the resolve to make this visit forthwith and conquer all show of feeling, which was a sort of file-biting and counter-irritant. And without his distinctly recognising the impulse, there certainly was present in him the sense that Celia would be there, and that he should pay her more attention than he had done before.

We mortals, men and women, devour many a disappointment between breakfast and dinner-time; keep back the tears and look a little pale about the lips, and in answer to inquiries say, "Oh, nothing!" Pride helps us; and pride is not a bad thing when it only urges us to hide our own hurts—not to hurt others.

CHAPTER VII

"Piacer e popone
Vuol la sua stagione."
—*Italian Proverb.*

Mr. Casaubon, as might be expected, spent a great deal of his time at the Grange in these weeks, and the hindrance which courtship occasioned to the progress of his great work—the Key to all Mythologies—naturally made him look forward the more eagerly to the happy termination of courtship. But he had deliberately incurred the hindrance, having made up his mind that it was now time for him to adorn his life with the graces of female companionship, to irradiate the gloom which fatigue was apt to hang over the intervals of studious labour with the play of female fancy, and to secure in this, his culminating age, the solace of female tendance for his declining years. Hence he determined to abandon himself to the stream of feeling, and perhaps was surprised to find what an exceedingly shallow rill it was. As in droughty regions baptism by immersion could only be performed symbolically, so Mr. Casaubon found that sprinkling was the utmost approach to a plunge which his stream would afford him; and he concluded that the poets had much exaggerated the force of masculine passion. Nevertheless, he observed with pleasure that Miss Brooke showed an ardent submissive affection which promised to fulfil his most agreeable previsions of marriage. It had once or twice crossed his mind that possibly there was some deficiency in Dorothea to account for the moderation of his abandonment; but he was unable to discern the deficiency, or to figure to himself a woman who would have pleased him better; so that there was clearly no reason to fall back upon but the exaggerations of human tradition.

"Could I not be preparing myself now to be more useful?" said Dorothea to him, one morning, early in the time of courtship; "could I not learn to read Latin and Greek aloud to you, as Milton's daughters did to their father, without understanding what they read?"

"I fear that would be wearisome to you," said Mr. Casaubon, smiling; "and, indeed, if I remember rightly, the young women you have mentioned regarded that exercise in unknown tongues as a ground for rebellion against the poet."

"Yes; but in the first place they were very naughty girls, else they would have been proud to minister to such a father; and in the second place they might have studied privately and taught themselves to understand what they read, and then it would have been interesting. I hope you don't expect me to be naughty and stupid?"

"I expect you to be all that an exquisite young lady can be in every possible relation of life. Certainly it might be a great advantage if you were able to copy the Greek character, and to that end it were well to begin with a little reading."

Dorothea seized this as a precious permission. She would not have asked Mr. Casaubon at once to teach her the languages, dreading of all things to be tiresome instead of helpful; but it was not entirely out of devotion to her future husband that she wished to know Latin and Greek. Those provinces of masculine knowledge seemed to her a standing-ground from which all truth could be seen more truly. As it was, she constantly doubted her own conclusions, because she felt her own ignorance: how could she be confident that one-roomed cottages were not for the glory of God, when men who knew the classics appeared to conciliate indifference to the cottages with zeal for the glory? Perhaps even Hebrew might be necessary—at least the alphabet and a few roots—in order to arrive at the core of things, and judge soundly on the social duties of the Christian. And she had not reached that point of renunciation at which she would have been satisfied with having a wise husband; she wished, poor child, to be wise herself. Miss Brooke was certainly very naïve with all her alleged cleverness. Celia, whose mind had never been thought too powerful, saw the emptiness of other people's pretensions much more readily. To have in general but little feeling, seems to be the only security against feeling too much on any particular occasion.

However, Mr. Casaubon consented to listen and teach for an hour together, like a schoolmaster of little boys, or rather like a lover, to whom a mistress's elementary ignorance and difficulties have a touching fitness. Few scholars would have disliked teaching the alphabet under such circumstances. But Dorothea herself was a little shocked and discouraged at her own stupidity, and the answers she got to some timid questions about the value of the Greek accents gave her a painful suspicion that here indeed there might be secrets not capable of explanation to a woman's reason.

Mr. Brooke had no doubt on that point, and expressed himself with his usual strength upon it one day that he came into the library while the reading was going forward.

"Well, but now, Casaubon, such deep studies, classics, mathematics, that kind of thing, are too taxing for a woman—too taxing, you know."

"Dorothea is learning to read the characters simply," said Mr. Casaubon, evading the question. "She had the very considerate thought of saving my eyes."

"Ah, well, without understanding, you know—that may not be so bad. But there is a lightness about the feminine mind—a touch and go—music, the fine arts, that kind of thing—they should study those up to a certain point, women should; but in a light way, you know. A woman should be able to sit down and play you or sing you a good old English tune. That is what I like; though I have heard most things—been at the opera in Vienna: Gluck, Mozart, everything of that sort. But I'm a conservative in music—it's not like ideas, you know. I stick to the good old tunes."

"Mr. Casaubon is not fond of the piano, and I am very glad he is not," said Dorothea, whose slight regard for domestic music and feminine fine art must be forgiven her, considering the small tinkling and smearing in which they chiefly consisted at that dark period. She smiled and looked up at her betrothed with grateful eyes. If he had always been asking her to play the "Last Rose of Summer," she would have required much resignation. "He says there is only an old harpsichord at Lowick, and it is covered with books."

"Ah, there you are behind Celia, my dear. Celia, now, plays very prettily, and is always ready to play. However, since Casaubon does not like it, you are all right. But it's a pity you should not have little recreations of that sort, Casaubon: the bow always strung—that kind of thing, you know—will not do."

"I never could look on it in the light of a recreation to have my ears teased with measured noises," said Mr. Casaubon. "A tune much iterated has the ridiculous effect of making the words in my mind perform a sort of minuet to keep time—an effect hardly tolerable, I imagine, after boyhood. As to the grander forms of music, worthy to accompany solemn celebrations, and even to serve as an educating influence according to the ancient conception, I say nothing, for with these we are not immediately concerned."

"No; but music of that sort I should enjoy," said Dorothea. "When we were coming home from Lausanne my uncle took us to hear the great organ at Freiberg, and it made me sob."

"That kind of thing is not healthy, my dear," said Mr. Brooke. "Casaubon, she will be in your hands now: you must teach my niece to take things more quietly, eh, Dorothea?"

He ended with a smile, not wishing to hurt his niece, but really thinking that it was perhaps better for her to be early married to so sober a fellow as Casaubon, since she would not hear of Chettam.

"It is wonderful, though," he said to himself as he shuffled out of the room—"it is wonderful that she should have liked him. However, the match is good. I should have been travelling out of my brief to have hindered it, let Mrs. Cadwallader say what she will. He is pretty certain to be a bishop, is Casaubon. That was a very seasonable pamphlet of his on the Catholic Question:—a deanery at least. They owe him a deanery."

And here I must vindicate a claim to philosophical reflectiveness, by remarking that Mr. Brooke on this occasion little thought of the Radical speech which, at a later period, he was led to make on the incomes of the bishops. What elegant historian would neglect a striking opportunity for pointing out that his heroes did not foresee the history of the world, or even their own actions?—For example, that Henry of Navarre, when a Protestant baby, little thought of being a Catholic monarch; or that Alfred the Great, when he measured his laborious nights with burning candles, had no idea of future gentlemen measuring their idle days with watches. Here is a mine of truth, which, however vigorously it may be worked, is likely to outlast our coal.

But of Mr. Brooke I make a further remark perhaps less warranted by precedent—namely, that if he had foreknown his speech, it might not have made any great difference. To think with pleasure of his niece's husband having a large ecclesiastical income was one thing—to make a Liberal speech was another thing; and it is a narrow mind which cannot look at a subject from various points of view.

CHAPTER VIII

"Oh, rescue her! I am her brother now,
And you her father. Every gentle maid
Should have a guardian in each gentleman."

It was wonderful to Sir James Chettam how well he continued to like going to the Grange after he had once encountered the difficulty of seeing Dorothea for the first time in the light of a woman who was engaged to another man. Of course the forked lightning seemed to pass through him when he first approached her, and he remained conscious throughout the interview of hiding uneasiness; but, good as he was, it must be owned that his uneasiness was less than it would have been if he had thought his rival a brilliant and desirable match. He had no sense of being eclipsed by Mr. Casaubon; he was only shocked that Dorothea was under a melancholy illusion, and his mortification lost some of its bitterness by being mingled with compassion.

Nevertheless, while Sir James said to himself that he had completely resigned her, since with the perversity of a Desdemona she had not affected a proposed match that was clearly suitable and according to nature; he could not yet be quite passive under the idea of her engagement to Mr. Casaubon. On the day when he first saw them together in the light of his present knowledge, it seemed to him that he had not taken the affair seriously enough. Brooke was really culpable; he ought to have hindered it. Who could speak to him? Something might be done perhaps even now, at least to defer the marriage. On his way home he turned into the Rectory and asked for Mr. Cadwallader. Happily, the Rector was at home, and his visitor was shown into the study, where all the fishing-tackle hung. But he himself was in a little room adjoining, at work with his turning apparatus, and he called to the baronet to join him there. The two were better friends than any other land-holder and clergyman in the county—a significant fact which was in agreement with the amiable expression of their faces.

Mr. Cadwallader was a large man, with full lips and a sweet smile; very plain and rough in his exterior, but with that solid imperturbable ease and good-humour which is infectious, and like great grassy hills in the sunshine, quiets even an irritated egoism, and makes it rather ashamed of itself. "Well, how are you?" he said, showing a hand not quite fit to be grasped. "Sorry I missed you before. Is there anything particular? You look vexed."

Sir James's brow had a little crease in it, a little depression of the eyebrow, which he seemed purposely to exaggerate as he answered.

"It is only this conduct of Brooke's. I really think somebody should speak to him."

"What? meaning to stand?" said Mr. Cadwallader, going on with the arrangement of the reels which he had just been turning. "I hardly think he means it. But where's the harm, if he likes it? Any one who objects to Whiggery should be glad when the Whigs don't put up the strongest fellow. They won't overturn the Constitution with our friend Brooke's head for a battering ram."

"Oh, I don't mean that," said Sir James, who, after putting down his hat and throwing himself into a chair, had begun to nurse his leg and examine the sole of his boot with much bitterness. "I mean this marriage. I mean his letting that blooming young girl marry Casaubon."

"What is the matter with Casaubon? I see no harm in him—if the girl likes him."

"She is too young to know what she likes. Her guardian ought to interfere. He ought not to allow the thing to be done in this headlong manner. I wonder a man like you, Cadwallader—a man with daughters, can look at the affair with indifference: and with such a heart as yours! Do think seriously about it."

"I am not joking; I am as serious as possible," said the Rector, with a provoking little inward laugh. "You are as bad as Elinor. She has been wanting me to go and lecture Brooke; and I have reminded her that her friends had a very poor opinion of the match she made when she married me."

"But look at Casaubon," said Sir James, indignantly. "He must be fifty, and I don't believe he could ever have been much more than the shadow of a man. Look at his legs!"

"Confound you handsome young fellows! you think of having it all your own way in the world. You don't understand women. They don't admire you half so much as you admire yourselves. Elinor used to tell her sisters that she married me for my ugliness—it was so various and amusing that it had quite conquered her prudence."

"You! it was easy enough for a woman to love you. But this is no question of beauty. I don't *like* Casaubon." This was Sir James's strongest way of implying that he thought ill of a man's character.

"Why? what do you know against him?" said the Rector, laying down his reels, and putting his thumbs into his arm-holes with an air of attention.

Sir James paused. He did not usually find it easy to give his reasons: it seemed to him strange that people should not know them without being told, since he only felt what was reasonable. At last he said—

"Now, Cadwallader, has he got any heart?"

"Well, yes. I don't mean of the melting sort, but a sound kernel, *that* you may be sure of. He is very good to his poor relations: pensions several of the women, and is educating a young fellow at a good deal of expense. Casaubon acts up to his sense of justice. His mother's sister made a bad match—a Pole, I think—lost herself—at any rate was disowned by her family. If it had not been for that, Casaubon would not have had so much money by half. I believe he went himself to find out his cousins, and see what he could do for them. Every man would not ring so well as that, if you tried his metal. *You* would, Chettam; but not every man."

"I don't know," said Sir James, colouring. "I am not so sure of myself." He paused a moment, and then added, "That was a right thing for Casaubon to do. But a man may wish to do what is right, and yet be a sort of parchment code. A woman may not be happy with him. And I think when a girl is so young as Miss Brooke is, her friends ought to interfere a little to hinder her from doing anything foolish. You laugh, because you fancy I have some feeling on my own account. But upon my honour, it is not that. I should feel just the same if I were Miss Brooke's brother or uncle."

"Well, but what should you do?"

"I should say that the marriage must not be decided on until she was of age. And depend upon it, in that case, it would never come off. I wish you saw it as I do—I wish you would talk to Brooke about it."

Sir James rose as he was finishing his sentence, for he saw Mrs. Cadwallader entering from the study. She held by the hand her youngest girl, about five years old, who immediately ran to papa, and was made comfortable on his knee.

"I hear what you are talking about," said the wife. "But you will make no impression on Humphrey. As long as the fish rise to his bait, everybody is what he ought to be. Bless you, Casaubon has got a trout stream, and does not care about fishing in it himself: could there be a better fellow?"

"Well, there is something in that," said the Rector, with his quiet, inward laugh. "It is a very good quality in a man to have a trout stream."

"But seriously," said Sir James, whose vexation had not yet spent itself, "don't you think the Rector might do some good by speaking?"

"Oh, I told you beforehand what he would say," answered Mrs. Cadwallader, lifting up her eyebrows. "I have done what I could: I wash my hands of the marriage."

"In the first place," said the Rector, looking rather grave, "it would be nonsensical to expect that I could convince Brooke, and make him act accordingly. Brooke is a very good fellow, but pulpy; he will run into any mould, but he won't keep shape."

"He might keep shape long enough to defer the marriage," said Sir James.

"But, my dear Chettam, why should I use my influence to Casaubon's disadvantage, unless I were much surer than I am that I should be acting for the advantage of Miss Brooke? I know no harm of Casaubon. I don't care about his Xisuthrus and Fee-fo-fum and the rest; but then he doesn't care about my fishing-tackle. As to the line he took on the Catholic Question, that was unexpected; but he has always been civil to me, and I don't see why I should spoil his sport. For anything I can tell, Miss Brooke may be happier with him than she would be with any other man."

"Humphrey! I have no patience with you. You know you would rather dine under the hedge than with Casaubon alone. You have nothing to say to each other."

"What has that to do with Miss Brooke's marrying him? She does not do it for my amusement."

"He has got no good red blood in his body," said Sir James.

"No. Somebody put a drop under a magnifying-glass, and it was all semicolons and parentheses," said Mrs. Cadwallader.

"Why does he not bring out his book, instead of marrying?"

said Sir James, with a disgust which he held warranted by the sound feeling of an English layman.

"Oh, he dreams footnotes, and they run away with all his brains. They say, when he was a little boy, he made an abstract of 'Hop o' my Thumb,' and he has been making abstracts ever since. Ugh! And that is the man Humphrey goes on saying that a woman may be happy with."

"Well, he is what Miss Brooke likes," said the Rector. "I don't profess to understand every young lady's taste."

"But if she were your own daughter?" said Sir James.

"That would be a different affair. She is *not* my daughter, and I don't feel called upon to interfere. Casaubon is as good as most of us. He is a scholarly clergyman, and creditable to the cloth. Some Radical fellow speechifying at Middlemarch said Casaubon was the learned straw-chopping incumbent, and Freke was the brick-and-mortar incumbent, and I was the angling incumbent. And upon my word, I don't see that one is worse or better than the other." The Rector ended with his silent laugh. He always saw the joke of any satire against himself. His conscience was large and easy, like the rest of him: it did only what it could do without any trouble.

Clearly, there would be no interference with Miss Brooke's marriage through Mr. Cadwallader; and Sir James felt with some sadness that she was to have perfect liberty of misjudgment. It was a sign of his good disposition that he did not slacken at all in his intention of carrying out Dorothea's design of the cottages. Doubtless this persistence was the best course for his own dignity: but pride only helps us to be generous; it never makes us so, any more than vanity makes us witty. She was now enough aware of Sir James's position with regard to her, to appreciate the rectitude of his perseverance in a landlord's duty, to which he had at first been urged by a lover's complaisance, and her pleasure in it was great enough to count for something even in her present happiness. Perhaps she gave to Sir James Chettam's cottages all the interest she could spare from Mr. Casaubon, or rather from the symphony of hopeful dreams, admiring trust, and passionate self-devotion which that learned gentleman had set playing in her soul. Hence it happened that in the good baronet's succeeding visits, while he was beginning to pay small attentions to Celia, he found himself talking with more and more pleasure to Dorothea. She was perfectly unconstrained and without irritation towards him now, and he was gradually discovering the delight there is in frank kindness and companionship between a man and a woman who have no passion to hide or confess.

CHAPTER IX

1st Gent. An ancient land in ancient oracles
Is called "law-thirsty:" all the struggle there
Was after order and a perfect rule.
Pray, where lie such lands now? . . .
2nd Gent. Why, where they lay of old—in human souls.

Mr. Casaubon's behaviour about settlements was highly satisfactory to Mr. Brooke, and the preliminaries of marriage rolled smoothly along, shortening the weeks of courtship. The betrothed bride must see her future home, and dictate any changes that she would like to have made there. A woman dictates before marriage in order that she may have an appetite for submission afterwards. And certainly, the mistakes that we male and female mortals make when we have our own way might fairly raise some wonder that we are so fond of it.

On a grey but dry November morning Dorothea drove to Lowick in company with her uncle and Celia. Mr. Casaubon's home was the manor-house. Close by, visible from some parts of the garden, was the little church, with the old parsonage opposite. In the beginning of his career, Mr. Casaubon had only held the living, but the death of his brother had put him in possession of the manor also. It had a small park, with a fine old oak here and there, and an avenue of limes towards the south-west front, with a sunk fence between park and pleasure-ground, so that from the drawing-room windows the glance swept uninterruptedly along a slope of greensward till the limes ended in a level of corn and pastures, which often seemed to melt into a lake under the setting sun. This was the happy side of the house, for the south and east looked rather melancholy even under the brightest morning. The grounds here were more confined, the flower-beds showed no very careful tendance, and large clumps of trees, chiefly of sombre yews, had risen high, not ten yards from the windows. The building, of greenish stone, was in the old English style, not ugly, but small-windowed and melancholy-looking: the sort of house that must have children, many flowers, open windows, and little vistas of bright things, to make it seem a joyous home. In this latter end of autumn, with a sparse remnant of yellow leaves falling slowly athwart the dark evergreens in a stillness without sunshine, the house too had an air of autumnal decline, and Mr. Casaubon, when he presented himself, had no bloom that could be thrown into relief by that background.

"Oh dear!" Celia said to herself, "I am sure Freshitt Hall would have been pleasanter than this." She thought of the white freestone, the pillared portico, and the terrace full of flowers, Sir James smiling above them like a prince issuing from his enchantment in a rose-bush, with a handkerchief swiftly metamorphosed from the most delicately-odorous petals—Sir James, who talked so agreeably, always about things which had common-sense in them, and not about learning! Celia had those light young feminine tastes which grave and weather-worn gentlemen sometimes prefer in a wife; but happily Mr. Casaubon's bias had been different, for he would have had no chance with Celia.

Dorothea, on the contrary, found the house and grounds all that she could wish: the dark book-shelves in the long library, the carpets and curtains with colours subdued by time, the curious old maps and bird's-eye views on the walls of the corridor, with here and there an old vase below, had no oppression for her, and seemed more cheerful than the casts and pictures at the Grange, which her uncle had long ago brought home from his travels—they being probably among the ideas he had taken in at one time. To poor Dorothea these severe classical nudities and smirking Renaissance-Correggiosities were painfully inexplicable, staring into the midst of her Puritanic conceptions: she had never been taught how she could bring them into any sort of relevance with her life. But the owners of Lowick apparently had not been travellers, and Mr. Casaubon's studies of the past were not carried on by means of such aids.

Dorothea walked about the house with delightful emotion. Everything seemed hallowed to her: this was to be the home of her wife-hood, and she looked up with eyes full of confidence to Mr. Casaubon when he drew her attention specially to some actual arrangement and asked her if she would like an alteration. All appeals to her taste she met gratefully, but saw nothing to alter. His efforts at exact courtesy and formal tenderness had no defect for her. She filled up all blanks with unmanifested perfections, interpreting him as she interpreted the works of Providence, and accounting for seeming discords by her own deafness to the higher harmonies. And there are many blanks left in the weeks of courtship, which a loving faith fills with happy assurance.

"Now, my dear Dorothea, I wish you to favour me by pointing out which room you would like to have as your boudoir," said Mr. Casaubon, showing that his views of the womanly nature were sufficiently large to include that requirement.

"It is very kind of you to think of that," said Dorothea, "but I assure you I would rather have all those matters decided for me. I shall be much happier to take everything as it is—just as you have been used to have it, or as you will yourself choose it to be. I have no motive for wishing anything else."

"O Dodo," said Celia, "will you not have the bow-windowed room upstairs?"

Mr. Casaubon led the way thither. The bow-window looked down the avenue of limes; the furniture was all of a faded blue, and there were miniatures of ladies and gentlemen with powdered hair hanging in a group. A piece of tapestry over a door also showed a blue-green world with a pale stag in it. The chairs and tables were thin-legged and easy to upset. It was a room where one might fancy the ghost of a tight-laced lady revisiting the scene of her embroidery. A light book-case contained duodecimo volumes of polite literature in calf, completing the furniture.

"Yes," said Mr. Brooke, "this would be a pretty room with some new hangings, sofas, and that sort of thing. A little bare now."

"No, uncle," said Dorothea, eagerly. "Pray do not speak of altering anything. There are so many other things in the world that want altering—I like to take these things as they are. And you like them as they are, don't you?" she added, looking at Mr. Casaubon. "Perhaps this was your mother's room when she was young."

"It was," he said, with his slow bend of the head.

"This is your mother," said Dorothea, who had turned to examine the group of miniatures. "It is like the tiny one you brought me; only, I should think a better portrait. And this one opposite, who is this?"

"Her elder sister. They were, like you and your sister, the only two children of their parents, who hang above them, you see."

"The sister is pretty," said Celia, implying that she thought less favourably of Mr. Casaubon's mother. It was a new opening to Celia's imagination, that he came of a family who had all been young in their time—the ladies wearing necklaces.

"It is a peculiar face," said Dorothea, looking closely. "Those deep grey eyes rather near together—and the delicate irregular nose with a sort of ripple in it—and all the powdered curls hanging backward. Altogether it seems to me peculiar rather than pretty. There is not even a family likeness between her and your mother."

"No. And they were not alike in their lot."

"You did not mention her to me," said Dorothea.

"My aunt made an unfortunate marriage. I never saw her."

Dorothea wondered a little, but felt that it would be indelicate just then to ask for any information which Mr. Casaubon did not proffer, and she turned to the window to admire the view. The sun had lately pierced the grey, and the avenue of limes cast shadows.

"Shall we not walk in the garden now?" said Dorothea.

"And you would like to see the church, you know," said Mr. Brooke. "It is a droll little church. And the village. It all lies in a nut-shell. By the way, it will suit you, Dorothea; for the cottages are like a row of alms-houses—little gardens, gillyflowers, that sort of thing."

"Yes, please," said Dorothea, looking at Mr. Casaubon, "I should like to see all that." She had got nothing from him more graphic about the Lowick cottages than that they were "not bad."

They were soon on a gravel walk which led chiefly between grassy borders and clumps of trees, this being the nearest way to the church, Mr. Casaubon said. At the little gate leading into the churchyard there was a pause while Mr. Casaubon went to the parsonage close by to fetch a key. Celia, who had been hanging a little in the rear, came up presently, when she saw that Mr. Casaubon was gone away, and said in her easy staccato, which always seemed to contradict the suspicion of any malicious intent—

"Do you know, Dorothea, I saw some one quite young coming up one of the walks."

"Is that astonishing, Celia?"

"There may be a young gardener, you know—why not?" said Mr. Brooke. "I told Casaubon he should change his gardener."

"No, not a gardener," said Celia; "a gentleman with a sketch-book. He had light-brown curls. I only saw his back. But he was quite young."

"The curate's son, perhaps," said Mr. Brooke. "Ah, there is Casaubon again, and Tucker with him. He is going to introduce Tucker. You don't know Tucker yet."

Mr. Tucker was the middle-aged curate, one of the "inferior clergy," who are usually not wanting in sons. But after the introduction, the conversation did not lead to any question about his family, and the startling apparition of youthfulness was forgotten by every one but Celia. She inwardly declined to believe that the light-brown curls and slim figure could have any relationship to Mr. Tucker, who was just as old and musty-looking as she would have expected Mr. Casaubon's curate to be; doubtless an excellent man who would go to heaven (for Celia wished not to be unprincipled), but the corners of his mouth were so unpleasant. Celia thought with some dismalness of the time she should have to spend as bridesmaid at Lowick, where the curate had probably no pretty little children whom she could like, irrespective of principle.

Mr. Tucker was invaluable in their walk; and perhaps Mr. Casaubon had not been without foresight on this head, the curate being able to answer all Dorothea's questions about the villagers and the other parishioners. Everybody, he assured her, was well off in Lowick: not a cottager in those double cottages at a low rent but kept a pig, and the strips of garden at the back were well tended. The small boys wore excellent corduroy, the girls went out as tidy servants, or did a little straw-plaiting at home: no looms here, no Dissent; and though the public disposition was rather towards laying by money than towards spirituality, there was not much vice. The speckled fowls were so numerous that Mr. Brooke observed, "Your farmers leave some barley for the women to glean, I see. The poor folks here might have a fowl in their pot, as the good French king used to wish for all his people. The French eat a good many fowls—skinny fowls, you know."

"I think it was a very cheap wish of his," said Dorothea, indignantly. "Are kings such monsters that a wish like that must be reckoned a royal virtue?"

"And if he wished them a skinny fowl," said Celia, "that would not be nice. But perhaps he wished them to have fat fowls."

"Yes, but the word has dropped out of the text, or perhaps was *subauditum;* that is, present in the king's mind, but not uttered," said Mr. Casaubon, smiling and bending his head towards Celia, who immediately dropped backward a little, because she could not bear Mr. Casaubon to blink at her.

Dorothea sank into silence on the way back to the house. She felt some disappointment, of which she was yet ashamed, that there was nothing for her to do in Lowick; and in the next few minutes her mind had glanced over the possibility, which she would have preferred, of finding that her home would be in a parish which had a larger share of the world's misery, so that she might have had more active duties in it. Then, recurring to the future actually before her, she made a picture of more complete devotion to Mr. Casaubon's aims, in which she would await new duties. Many such might reveal themselves to the higher knowledge gained by her in that companionship.

Mr. Tucker soon left them, having some clerical work which would not allow him to lunch at the Hall; and as they were re-entering the garden through the little gate, Mr. Casaubon said—

"You seem a little sad, Dorothea. I trust you are pleased with what you have seen."

"I am feeling something which is perhaps foolish and wrong," answered Dorothea, with her usual openness—"almost wishing that the people wanted more to be done for them here. I have known so few ways of making my life good for anything. Of course, my notions of usefulness must be narrow. I must learn new ways of helping people."

"Doubtless," said Mr. Casaubon. "Each position has its corresponding duties. Yours, I trust, as the mistress of Lowick, will not leave any yearning unfulfilled."

"Indeed, I believe that," said Dorothea, earnestly. "Do not suppose that I am sad."

"That is well. But, if you are not tired, we will take another way to the house than that by which we came."

Dorothea was not at all tired, and a little circuit was made towards a fine yew-tree, the chief hereditary glory of the grounds on this side of the house. As they approached it, a figure, conspicuous on a dark background of evergreens, was seated on a bench, sketching the old tree. Mr. Brooke, who was walking in front with Celia, turned his head, and said—

"Who is that youngster, Casaubon?"

They had come very near when Mr. Casaubon answered—

"That is a young relative of mine, a second cousin: the grandson, in fact," he added, looking at Dorothea, "of the lady whose portrait you have been noticing, my aunt Julia."

The young man had laid down his sketch-book and risen. His bushy light-brown curls, as well as his youthfulness, identified him at once with Celia's apparition.

"Dorothea, let me introduce to you my cousin, Mr. Ladislaw Will, this is Miss Brooke."

The cousin was so close now, that, when he lifted his hat, Dorothea could see a pair of grey eyes rather near together, a delicate irregular nose with a little ripple in it, and hair falling backward; but there was a mouth and chin of a more prominent, threatening aspect than belonged to the type of the grandmother's miniature. Young Ladislaw did not feel it necessary to smile, as if he were charmed with this introduction to his future second cousin and her relatives; but wore rather a pouting air of discontent.

"You are an artist, I see," said Mr. Brooke, taking up the sketch-book and turning it over in his unceremonious fashion.

"No, I only sketch a little. There is nothing fit to be seen there," said young Ladislaw, colouring, perhaps with temper rather than modesty.

"Oh, come, this is a nice bit, now. I did a little in this way myself at one time, you know. Look here, now; this is what I call a nice thing, done with what we used to call *brio*." Mr. Brooke held out towards the two girls a large coloured sketch of stony ground and trees, with a pool.

"I am no judge of these things," said Dorothea, not coldly, but with an eager deprecation of the appeal to her. "You know, uncle, I never see the beauty of those pictures which you say are so much praised. They are a language I do not understand. I suppose there is some relation between pictures and nature which I am too ignorant to feel—just as you see what a Greek sentence stands for which means nothing to me." Dorothea looked up at Mr. Casaubon, who bowed his head towards her, while Mr. Brooke said, smiling nonchalantly—

"Bless me, now, how different people are! But you had a bad style of teaching, you know—else this is just the thing for girls—sketching, fine art and so on. But you took to drawing plans; you don't understand *morbidezza*, and that kind of thing. You will come to my house, I hope, and I will show you what I did in this way," he continued, turning to young Ladislaw, who had to be recalled from his preoccupation in observing Dorothea. Ladislaw had made up his mind that she must be an unpleasant girl, since she was going to marry Casaubon, and what she said of her stupidity about pictures would have confirmed that opinion even if he had believed her. As it was, he took her words for a covert judgment, and was certain that she thought his sketch detestable. There was too much cleverness in her apology: she was laughing both at her uncle and himself. But what a voice! It was like the voice of a soul that had once lived in an Æolian harp. This must be one of Nature's inconsistencies. There could be no sort of passion in a girl who would marry Casaubon. But he turned from her, and bowed his thanks for Mr. Brooke's invitation.

"We will turn over my Italian engravings together," continued that good-natured man. "I have no end of those things, that I have laid by for years. One gets rusty in this part of the country, you know. Not you, Casaubon; you stick to your studies; but my best ideas get undermost—out of use, you know. You clever young men must guard against indolence. I was too indolent, you know: else I might have been anywhere at one time."

"That is a seasonable admonition," said Mr. Casaubon; "but now we will pass on to the house, lest the young ladies should be tired of standing."

When their backs were turned, young Ladislaw sat down to go on with his sketching, and as he did so his face broke into an expression of amusement which increased as he went on drawing, till at last he threw back his head and laughed aloud. Partly it was the reception of his own artistic production that tickled him; partly the notion of his grave cousin as the lover of that girl; and partly Mr. Brooke's definition of the place he might have held but for the impediment of indolence. Mr. Will Ladislaw's sense of the ludicrous lit up his features very agreeably: it was the pure enjoyment of comicality, and had no mixture of sneering and self-exaltation.

"What is your nephew going to do with himself, Casaubon?" said Mr. Brooke, as they went on.

"My cousin, you mean—not my nephew."

"Yes, yes, cousin. But in the way of a career, you know."

"The answer to that question is painfully doubtful. On leaving Rugby he declined to go to an English university, where I would gladly have placed him, and chose what I must consider the anomalous course of studying at Heidelberg. And now he wants to go abroad again, without any special object, save the vague purpose of what he calls culture, preparation for he knows not what. He declines to choose a profession."

"He has no means but what you furnish, I suppose."

"I have always given him and his friends reason to understand that I would furnish in moderation what was necessary for providing him with a scholarly education, and launching him respectably. I am therefore bound to fulfil the expectation so raised," said Mr. Casaubon, putting his conduct in the light of mere rectitude: a trait of delicacy which Dorothea noticed with admiration.

"He has a thirst for travelling; perhaps he may turn out a Bruce or a Mungo Park," said Mr. Brooke. "I had a notion of that myself at one time."

"No, he has no bent towards exploration, or the enlargement of our geognosis: that would be a special purpose which I could recognise with some approbation, though without felicitating him on a career which so often ends in premature and violent death. But so far is he from having any desire for a more accurate knowledge of the earth's surface, that he said he should prefer not to know the sources of the Nile, and that there should be some unknown regions preserved as hunting-grounds for the poetic imagination."

"Well, there is something in that, you know," said Mr. Brooke, who had certainly an impartial mind.

"It is, I fear, nothing more than a part of his general inaccuracy and indisposition to thoroughness of all kinds, which would be a bad augury for him in any profession, civil or sacred, even were he so far submissive to ordinary rule as to choose one."

"Perhaps he has conscientious scruples founded on his own unfitness," said Dorothea, who was interesting herself in finding a favourable explanation. "Because the law and medicine should be very serious professions to undertake, should they not? People's lives and fortunes depend on them."

"Doubtless; but I fear that my young relative Will Ladislaw is chiefly determined in his aversion to these callings by a dislike to steady application, and to that kind of acquirement which is needful instrumentally, but is not charming or immediately inviting to self-indulgent taste. I have insisted to him on what Aristotle has stated with admirable brevity, that for the achievement of any work regarded as an end there must be a prior exercise of many energies or acquired facilities of a secondary order, demanding patience. I have pointed to my own manuscript volumes, which represent the toil of years preparatory to a work not yet accomplished. But in vain. To careful reasoning of this kind he replies by calling himself Pegasus, and every form of prescribed work 'harness.'"

Celia laughed. She was surprised to find that Mr. Casaubon could say something quite amusing.

"Well, you know, he may turn out a Byron, a Chatterton, a Churchill—that sort of thing—there's no telling," said Mr. Brooke. "Shall you let him go to Italy, or wherever else he wants to go?"

"Yes; I have agreed to furnish him with moderate supplies for a year or so; he asks no more. I shall let him be tried by the test of freedom."

"That is very kind of you," said Dorothea, looking up at Mr. Casaubon with delight. "It is noble. After all, people may really have in them some vocation which is not quite plain to themselves, may they not? They may seem idle and weak because they are growing. We should be very patient with each other, I think."

"I suppose it is being engaged to be married that has made you think patience good," said Celia, as soon as she and Dorothea were alone together, taking off their wrappings.

"You mean that I am very impatient, Celia."

"Yes; when people don't do and say just what you like." Celia had become less afraid of "saying things" to Dorothea since this engagement: cleverness seemed to her more pitiable than ever.

CHAPTER X

"He had catched a great cold, had he had no other clothes to wear than the skin of a bear not yet killed."—FULLER.

YOUNG Ladislaw did not pay that visit to which Mr. Brooke had invited him, and only six days afterwards Mr. Casaubon mentioned that his young relative had started for the Continent, seeming by this cold vagueness to waive inquiry. Indeed, Will had declined to fix on any more precise destination than the entire area of Europe. Genius, he held, is necessarily intolerant of fetters: on the one hand it must have the utmost play for its spontaneity; on the other, it may confidently await those messages from the universe which summon it to its peculiar work, only placing itself in an attitude of receptivity towards all sublime chances. The attitudes of receptivity are various, and Will had sincerely tried many of them. He was not excessively fond of wine, but he had several times taken too much, simply as an experiment in that form of ecstasy; he had fasted till he was faint, and then supped on lobster; he had made himself ill with doses of opium. Nothing greatly original had resulted from these measures; and the effects of the opium had convinced him that there was an entire dissimilarity between his constitution and De Quincey's. The super added circumstance which would evolve the genius had not yet come; the universe had not yet beckoned. Even Cæsar's fortune at one time was but a grand presentiment. We know what a masquerade all development is, and what effective shapes may be disguised in helpless embryos.—In fact, the world is full of hopeful analogies and handsome dubious eggs called possibilities. Will saw clearly enough the pitiable instances of long incubation producing no chick, and but for gratitude would have laughed at Casaubon, whose plodding application, rows of note-books, and small taper of learned theory exploring the tossed ruins of the world, seemed to enforce a moral entirely encouraging to Will's generous reliance on the intentions of the universe with regard to himself. He held that reliance to be a mark of genius; and certainly it is no mark to the contrary; genius consisting neither in self-conceit nor in humility, but in a power to make or do, not anything in general, but something in particular. Let him start for the Continent, then, without our pronouncing on his future. Among all forms of mistake, prophecy is the most gratuitous.

But at present this caution against a too hasty judgment interests me more in relation to Mr. Casaubon than to his young cousin. If to Dorothea Mr. Casaubon had been the mere occasion which had set alight the fine inflammable material of her youthful illusions, does it follow that he was fairly represented in the minds of those less impassioned personages who have hitherto delivered their judgments concerning him? I protest against any absolute conclusion, any prejudice derived from Mrs. Cadwallader's contempt for a neighbouring clergyman's alleged greatness of soul, of Sir James Chettam's poor opinion of his rival's legs,—from Mr. Brooke's failure to elicit a companion's ideas, or from Celia's criticism of a middle-aged scholar's personal appearance. I am not sure that the greatest man of his age, if ever that solitary superlative existed, could escape these unfavourable reflections of himself in various small mirrors; and even Milton, looking for his portrait in a spoon, must submit to have the facial angle of a bumpkin. Moreover, if Mr. Casaubon, speaking for himself, has rather a chilling rhetoric, it is not therefore certain that there is no good work or fine feeling in him. Did not an immortal physicist and interpreter of hieroglyphs write detestable verses? Has the theory of the solar system been advanced by graceful manners and conversational tact? Suppose we turn from outside estimates of a man, to wonder, with keener interest, what is the report of his own consciousness about his doings or capacity: with what hindrances he is carrying on his daily labours; what fading of hopes, or what deeper fixity of self-delusion the years are marking off within him; and with what spirit he wrestles against universal pressure, which will one day be too heavy for him, and bring his heart to its final pause. Doubtless his lot is important in his own eyes; and the chief reason that we think he asks too large a place in our consideration must be our want of room for him, since we refer him to the Divine regard with perfect confidence; nay, it is even held sublime for our neighbour to expect the utmost there, however little he may have got from us. Mr. Casaubon, too, was the centre of his own world; if he was liable to think that others were providentially made for him, and especially to consider them in the light of their fitness for the author of a "Key to all Mythologies," this trait is not quite alien to us, and, like the other mendicant hopes of mortals, claims some of our pity.

Certainly this affair of his marriage with Miss Brooke touched him more nearly than it did any one of the persons who have hitherto shown their disapproval of it, and in the present stage of things I feel more tenderly towards his experience of success than towards the disappointment of the amiable Sir James. For in truth, as the day fixed for his marriage came nearer, Mr. Casaubon did not find his spirits rising; nor did the contemplation of that matrimonial garden-scene, where, as all experience showed, the path was to be bordered with flowers, prove persistently more enchanting to him than the accustomed vaults where he walked taper in hand. He did not confess to himself, still less could he have breathed to another, his surprise that though he had won a lovely and noble-hearted girl he had not won delight,—which he had also regarded as an object to be found by search. It is true that he knew all the classical passages implying the contrary; but knowing classical passages, we find, is a mode of motion, which explains why they leave so little extra force for their personal application.

Poor Mr. Casaubon had imagined that his long studious bachelorhood had stored up for him a compound interest of enjoyment, and that large drafts on his affections would not fail to be honoured; for we all of us, grave or light, get our thoughts entangled in metaphors, and act fatally on the strength of them. And now he was in danger of being saddened by the very conviction that his circumstances were unusually happy: there was nothing external by which he could account for a certain blankness of sensibility which came over him just when his expectant gladness should have been most lively, just when he exchanged the accustomed dulness of his Lowick library for his visits to the Grange. Here was a weary experience in which he was as utterly condemned to loneliness as in the despair which sometimes threatened him while toiling in the morass of authorship without seeming nearer to the goal. And his was that worst loneliness which would shrink from sympathy. He could not but wish that Dorothea should think him not less happy than the world would expect her successful suitor to be; and in relation to his authorship he leaned on her young trust and veneration, he liked to draw forth her fresh interest in listening, as a means of encouragement to himself: in talking to her he presented all his performance and intention with the reflected confidence of the pedagogue, and rid himself for the time of that chilling ideal audience which crowded his laborious uncreative hours with the vaporous pressure of Tartarean shades.

For to Dorothea, after that toy-box history of the world adapted to young ladies which had made the chief part of her education, Mr. Casaubon's talk about his great book was full of new vistas; and this sense of revelation, this surprise of a nearer introduction to Stoics and Alexandrians, as people who had ideas not totally unlike her own, kept in abeyance for the time her usual eagerness for a binding theory which could bring her own life and doctrine into strict connection with that amazing past, and give the remotest sources of knowledge some bearing on her actions. That more complete teaching would come—Mr. Casaubon would tell her all that: she was looking forward to higher initiation in ideas, as she was looking forward to marriage, and blending her dim conceptions of both. It would be a great mistake to suppose that Dorothea would have cared about any share in Mr. Casaubon's learning as mere accomplishment; for though opinion in the neighbourhood of Freshitt and Tipton had pronounced her clever, that epithet would not have described her to circles in whose more precise vocabulary cleverness implies mere aptitude for knowing and doing, apart from character. All her eagerness for acquirement lay within that full current of sympathetic motive in which her ideas and impulses were habitually swept along. She did not want to deck herself with knowledge—to wear it loose from the nerves and blood that fed her action; and if she had written a book she must have done it as Saint Theresa did, under the command of an authority that constrained her conscience. But something she yearned for by which her life might be filled with action at once rational and ardent; and since the time was gone by for guiding visions and spiritual directors, since prayer heightened yearning but not instruction, what lamp was there but knowledge? Surely learned men kept the only oil; and who more learned than Mr. Casaubon?

Thus in these brief weeks Dorothea's joyous grateful expectation was unbroken, and however her lover might occasionally be conscious of flatness, he could never refer it to any slackening of her affectionate interest.

The season was mild enough to encourage the project of extending the wedding journey as far as Rome, and Mr. Casaubon was anxious for this because he wished to inspect some manuscripts in the Vatican.

"I still regret that your sister is not to accompany us," he said one morning, some time after it had been ascertained that Celia objected to go, and that Dorothea did not wish for her companionship. "You will have many lonely hours, Dorothea, for I shall be constrained to make the utmost use of my time during our stay in Rome, and I should feel more at liberty if you had a companion."

The words "I should feel more at liberty" grated on Dorothea. For the first time in speaking to Mr. Casaubon she coloured from annoyance.

"You must have misunderstood me very much," she said, "if you think I should not enter into the value of your time—if you think that I should not willingly give up whatever interfered with your using it to the best purpose."

"That is very amiable in you, my dear Dorothea," said Mr. Casaubon, not in the least noticing that she was hurt; "but if you had a lady as your companion, I could put you both under the care of a cicerone, and we could thus achieve two purposes in the same space of time."

"I beg you will not refer to this again," said Dorothea, rather haughtily. But immediately she feared that she was wrong, and turning towards him she laid her hand on his, adding in a different tone, "Pray do not be anxious about me. I shall have so much to think of when I am alone. And Tantripp will be a sufficient companion, just to take care of me. I could not bear to have Celia: she would be miserable."

It was time to dress. There was to be a dinner-party that day, the last of the parties which were held at the Grange as proper preliminaries to the wedding, and Dorothea was glad of a reason for moving away at once on the sound of the bell, as if she needed more than her usual amount of preparation. She was ashamed of being irritated from some cause she could not define even to herself; for though she had no intention to be untruthful, her reply had not touched the real hurt within her. Mr. Casaubon's words had been quite reasonable, yet they had brought a vague instantaneous sense of aloofness on his part.

"Surely I am in a strangely selfish weak state of mind," she said to herself. "How can I have a husband who is so much above me without knowing that he needs me less than I need him?"

Having convinced herself that Mr. Casaubon was altogether right, she recovered her equanimity, and was an agreeable image of serene dignity when she came into the drawing-room in her silver-grey dress—the simple lines of her dark-brown hair parted over her brow and coiled massively behind, in keeping with the entire absence from her manner and expression of all search after mere effect. Sometimes when Dorothea was in company, there seemed to be as complete an air of repose about her as if she had been a picture of Santa Barbara looking out from her tower into the clear air; but these intervals of quietude made the energy of her speech and emotion the more remarked when some outward appeal had touched her.

She was naturally the subject of many observations this evening, for the dinner-party was large and rather more miscellaneous as to the male portion than any which had been held at the Grange since Mr. Brooke's nieces had resided with him, so that the talking was done in duos and trios more or less inharmonious. There was the newly-elected mayor of Middlemarch, who happened to be a manufacturer; the philanthropic banker his brother-in-law, who predominated so much in the town that some called him a Methodist, others a hypocrite, according to the resources of their vocabulary; and there were various professional men. In fact, Mrs. Cadwallader said that Brooke was beginning to treat the Middlemarchers, and that she preferred the farmers at the tithe-dinner, who drank her health unpretentiously, and were not ashamed of their grandfathers' furniture. For in that part of the country, before Reform had done its notable part in developing the political consciousness, there was a clearer distinction of ranks and a dimmer distinction of parties; so that Mr. Brooke's miscellaneous invitations seemed to belong to that general laxity which came from his inordinate travel and habit of taking too much in the form of ideas.

Already, as Miss Brooke passed out of the dining-room, opportunity was found for some interjectional "asides."

"A fine woman, Miss Brooke! an uncommonly fine woman, by God!" said Mr. Standish, the old lawyer, who had been so long concerned with the landed gentry that he had become landed himself, and used that oath in a deep-mouthed manner as a sort of armorial bearings, stamping the speech of a man who held a good position.

Mr. Bulstrode, the banker, seemed to be addressed, but that gentleman disliked coarseness and profanity, and merely bowed. The remark was taken up by Mr. Chichely, a middle-aged bachelor and coursing celebrity, who had a complexion something like an Easter egg, a few hairs carefully arranged, and a carriage implying the consciousness of a distinguished appearance.

"Yes, but not my style of woman: I like a woman who lays herself out a little more to please us. There should be a little filigree about a woman—something of the coquette. A man likes a sort of challenge. The more of a dead set she makes at you the better."

"There's some truth in that," said Mr. Standish, disposed to be genial. "And, by God, it's usually the way with them. I suppose it answers some wise ends: Providence made them so, eh, Bulstrode?"

"I should be disposed to refer coquetry to another source," said Mr. Bulstrode. "I should rather refer it to the devil."

"Ay, to be sure, there should be a little devil in a woman," said Mr. Chichely, whose study of the fair sex seemed to have been detrimental to his theology. "And I like them blond, with a certain gait, and a swan neck. Between ourselves, the mayor's daughter is more to my taste than Miss Brooke or Miss Celia either. If I were a marrying man I should choose Miss Vincy before either of them."

"Well, make up, make up," said Mr. Standish, jocosely; "you see the middle-aged fellows carry the day."

Mr. Chichely shook his head with much meaning: he was not going to incur the certainty of being accepted by the woman he would choose.

The Miss Vincy who had the honour of being Mr. Chichely's ideal was of course not present; for Mr. Brooke, always objecting to go too far, would not have chosen that his nieces should meet the daughter of a Middlemarch manufacturer, unless it were on a public occasion. The feminine part of the company included none whom Lady Chettam or Mrs. Cadwallader could object to; for Mrs. Renfrew, the colonel's widow, was not only unexceptionable in point of breeding, but also interesting on the ground of her complaint, which puzzled the doctors, and seemed clearly a case wherein the fulness of professional knowledge might need the supplement of quackery. Lady Chettam, who attributed her own remarkable health to home-made bitters united with constant medical attendance, entered with much exercise of the imagination into Mrs. Renfrew's account of symptoms, and into the amazing futility in her case of all strengthening medicines.

"Where can all the strength of those medicines go, my dear?" said the mild but stately dowager, turning to Mrs. Cadwallader reflectively, when Mrs. Renfrew's attention was called away.

"It strengthens the disease," said the Rector's wife, much too well-born not to be an amateur in medicine. "Everything depends on the constitution: some people make fat, some blood, and some bile—that's my view of the matter; and whatever they take is a sort of grist to the mill."

"Then she ought to take medicines that would reduce—reduce the disease, you know, if you are right, my dear. And I think what you say is reasonable."

"Certainly it is reasonable. You have two sorts of potatoes, fed on the same soil. One of them grows more and more watery——"

"Ah! like this poor Mrs. Renfrew—that is what I think. Dropsy! There is no swelling yet—it is inward. I should say she ought to take drying medicines, shouldn't you?—or a dry hot-air bath. Many things might be tried, of a drying nature."

"Let her try a certain person's pamphlets," said Mrs. Cadwallader in an undertone, seeing the gentlemen enter. "*He* does not want drying."

"Who, my dear?" said Lady Chettam, a charming woman, not so quick as to nullify the pleasure of explanation.

"The bridegroom—Casaubon. He has certainly been drying up faster since the engagement: the flame of passion, I suppose."

"I should think he is far from having a good constitution," said Lady Chettam, with a still deeper undertone. "And then his studies—so very dry, as you say."

"Really, by the side of Sir James, he looks like a death's head skinned over for the occasion. Mark my words: in a year from this time that girl will hate him. She looks up to him as an oracle now, and by-and-by she will be at the other extreme. All flightiness!"

"How very shocking! I fear she is headstrong. But tell me—you know all about him—is there anything very bad? What is the truth?"

"The truth? he is as bad as the wrong physic—nasty to take, and sure to disagree."

"There could not be anything worse than that," said Lady Chettam, with so vivid a conception of the physic that she seemed to have learned something exact about Mr. Casaubon's disadvantages. "However, James will hear nothing against Miss Brooke. He says she is the mirror of women still."

"That is a generous make-believe of his. Depend upon it, he likes little Celia better, and she appreciates him. I hope you like my little Celia?"

"Certainly; she is fonder of geraniums, and seems more docile, though not so fine a figure. But we were talking of physic: tell me about this new young surgeon, Mr. Lydgate. I am told he is wonderfully clever: he certainly looks it—a fine brow indeed."

"He is a gentleman. I heard him talking to Humphrey. He talks well."

"Yes. Mr. Brooke says he is one of the Lydgates of Northumberland, really well connected. One does not expect it in a practitioner of that kind. For my own part, I like a medical man more on a footing with the servants; they are often all the cleverer. I assure you I found poor Hicks's judgment unfailing; I never knew him wrong. He was coarse and butcher-like, but he knew my constitution. It was a loss to me his going off so suddenly. Dear me, what a very animated conversation Miss Brooke seems to be having with this Mr. Lydgate!"

"She is talking cottages and hospitals with him," said Mrs. Cadwallader, whose ears and power of interpretation were quick. "I believe he is a sort of philanthropist, so Brooke is sure to take him up."

"James," said Lady Chettam when her son came near, "bring Mr. Lydgate and introduce him to me. I want to test him."

The affable dowager declared herself delighted with this opportunity of making Mr. Lydgate's acquaintance, having heard of his success in treating fever on a new plan.

Mr. Lydgate had the medical accomplishment of looking perfectly grave whatever nonsense was talked to him, and his dark steady eyes gave him impressiveness as a listener. He was as little as possible like the lamented Hicks, especially in a certain careless refinement about his toilette and utterance. Yet Lady Chettam gathered much confidence in him. He confirmed her view of her own constitution as being peculiar, by admitting that all constitutions might be called peculiar, and he did not deny that hers might be more peculiar than others. He did not approve of a too lowering system, including reckless cupping, nor, on the other hand, of incessant port wine and bark. He said "I think so" with an air of so much deference accompanying the insight of agreement, that she formed the most cordial opinion of his talents.

"I am quite pleased with your *protégé*," she said to Mr. Brooke before going away.

"My *protégé*?—dear me!—who is that?" said Mr. Brooke.

"This young Lydgate, the new doctor. He seems to me to understand his profession admirably."

"Oh, Lydgate! he is not my *protégé*, you know; only I knew an uncle of his who sent me a letter about him. However, I think he is likely to be first-rate—has studied in Paris, knew Broussais; has ideas, you know—wants to raise the profession."

"Lydgate has lots of ideas, quite new, about ventilation and diet, that sort of thing," resumed Mr. Brooke, after he had handed out Lady Chettam, and had returned to be civil to a group of Middlemarchers.

"Hang it, do you think that is quite sound?—upsetting the old treatment, which has made Englishmen what they are?" said Mr. Standish.

"Medical knowledge is at a low ebb among us," said Mr. Bulstrode, who spoke in a subdued tone, and had rather a sickly air. "I, for my part, hail the advent of Mr. Lydgate. I hope to find good reason for confiding the new hospital to his management."

"That is all very fine," replied Mr. Standish, who was not fond of Mr. Bulstrode; "if you like him to try experiments on your hospital patients, and kill a few people for charity, I have no objection. But I am not going to hand money out of my purse to have experiments tried on me. I like treatment that has been tested a little."

"Well, you know, Standish, every dose you take is an experiment—an experiment, you know," said Mr. Brooke, nodding towards the lawyer.

"Oh, if you talk in that sense!" said Mr. Standish, with as much disgust at such non-legal quibbling as a man can well betray towards a valuable client.

"I should be glad of any treatment that would cure me without reducing me to a skeleton, like poor Grainger," said Mr. Vincy, the mayor, a florid man, who would have served for a study of flesh in striking contrast with the Franciscan tints of Mr. Bulstrode. "It's an uncommonly dangerous thing to be left without any padding against the shafts of disease, as somebody said,—and I think it a very good expression myself."

Mr. Lydgate, of course, was out of hearing. He had quitted the party early, and would have thought it altogether tedious but for the novelty of certain introductions, especially the introduction to Miss Brooke, whose youthful bloom, with her approaching marriage to that faded scholar, and her interest in matters socially useful, gave her the piquancy of an unusual combination.

"She is a good creature—that fine girl—but a little too earnest," he thought. "It is troublesome to talk to such women. They are always wanting reasons, yet they are too ignorant to understand the merits of any question, and usually fall back on their moral sense to settle things after their own taste."

Evidently Miss Brooke was not Mr. Lydgate's style of woman any more than Mr. Chichely's. Considered, indeed, in relation to the latter, whose mind was matured, she was altogether a mistake, and calculated to shock his trust in final causes, including the adaptation of fine young women to purple-faced bachelors. But Lydgate was less ripe, and might possibly have experience before him which would modify his opinion as to the most excellent things in woman.

Miss Brooke, however, was not again seen by either of these gentlemen under her maiden name. Not long after that dinner-party she had become Mrs. Casaubon, and was on her way to Rome.

CHAPTER XI

> "But deeds and language such as men do use,
> And persons such as comedy would choose,
> When she would show an image of the times,
> And sport with human follies, not with crimes."
> —BEN JONSON.

LYDGATE, in fact, was already conscious of being fascinated by a woman strikingly different from Miss Brooke: he did not in the least suppose that he had lost his balance and fallen in love, but he had said of that particular woman, "She is grace itself; she is perfectly lovely and accomplished. That is what a woman ought to be: she ought to produce the effect of exquisite music." Plain women he regarded as he did the other severe facts of life, to be faced with philosophy and investigated by science. But Rosamond Vincy seemed to have the true melodic charm; and when a man has seen the woman whom he would have chosen if he had intended to marry speedily, his remaining a bachelor will usually depend on her resolution rather than on his. Lydgate believed that he should not marry for several years: not marry until he had trodden out a good clear path for himself away from the broad road which was quite ready made. He had seen Miss Vincy above his horizon almost as long as it had taken Mr. Casaubon to become engaged and married: but this learned gentleman was possessed of a fortune; he had assembled his voluminous notes, and had made that sort of reputation which precedes performance,—often the larger part of a man's fame. He took a wife, as we have seen, to adorn the remaining quadrant of his course, and be a little moon that would cause hardly a calculable perturbation. But Lydgate was young, poor, ambitious. He had his half-century before him instead of behind him, and he had come to Middlemarch bent on doing many things that were not directly fitted to make his fortune or even secure him a good income. To a man under such circumstances, taking a wife is something more than a question of adornment, however highly he may rate this; and Lydgate was disposed to give it the first place among wifely functions. To his taste, guided by a single conversation, here was the point on which Miss Brooke would be found wanting, notwithstanding her undeniable beauty. She did not look at things from the proper feminine angle. The society of such women was about as relaxing as going from your work to teach the second form, instead of reclining in a paradise with sweet laughs for bird-notes, and blue eyes for a heaven.

Certainly nothing at present could seem much less important to Lydgate than the turn of Miss Brooke's mind, or to Miss Brooke than the qualities of the woman who had attracted this young surgeon. But any one watching keenly the stealthy convergence of human lots, sees a slow preparation of effects from one life on another, which tells like a calculated irony on the indifference or the frozen stare with which we look at our unintroduced neighbour. Destiny stands by sarcastic with our *dramatis personæ* folded in her hand.

Old provincial society had its share of this subtle movement: had not only its striking downfalls, its brilliant young professional dandies who ended by living up an entry with a drab and six children for their establishment, but also those less marked vicissitudes which are constantly shifting the boundaries of social intercourse, and begetting new consciousness of interdependence. Some slipped a little downward, some got higher footing: people denied aspirates, gained wealth, and fastidious gentlemen stood for boroughs; some were caught in political currents, some in ecclesiastical, and perhaps found themselves surprisingly grouped in consequence; while a few personages or families that stood with rocky firmness amid all this fluctuation, were slowly presenting new aspects in spite of solidity, and altering with the double change of self and beholder. Municipal town and rural parish gradually made fresh threads of connection—gradually, as the old stocking gave way to the savings-bank, and the worship of the solar guinea became extinct; while squires and baronets, and even lords who had once lived blamelessly afar from the civic mind, gathered the faultiness of closer acquaintanceship. Settlers, too, came from distant counties, some with an alarming novelty of skill, others with an offensive advantage in cunning. In fact, much the same sort of movement and mixture went on in old England as we find in older Herodotus, who also, in telling what had been, thought it well to take a woman's lot for his starting-point; though Io, as a maiden apparently beguiled by attractive merchandise, was the reverse of Miss Brooke, and in this respect perhaps bore more resemblance to Rosamond Vincy, who had excellent taste in costume, with that nymph-like figure and pure blondness which give the largest range to choice in the flow and colour of drapery. But these things made only part of her charm. She was admitted to be the flower of Mrs. Lemon's school, the chief school in the county, where the teaching included all that was demanded in the accomplished female—even to extras, such as the getting in and out of a carriage. Mrs. Lemon herself had always held up Miss Vincy as an example: no pupil, she said, exceeded that young lady for mental acquisition and propriety of speech, while her musical execution was quite exceptional. We cannot help the way in which people speak of us, and probably if Mrs. Lemon had undertaken to describe Juliet or Imogen, these heroines would not have seemed poetical. The first vision of Rosamond would have been enough with most judges to dispel any prejudice excited by Mrs. Lemon's praise.

Lydgate could not be long in Middlemarch without having that agreeable vision, or even without making the acquaintance of the Vincy family; for though Mr. Peacock, whose practice he had paid something to enter on, had not been their doctor (Mrs. Vincy not liking the lowering system adopted by him), he had many patients among their connections and acquaintances. For who of any consequence in Middlemarch was not connected or at least acquainted with the Vincys? They were old manufacturers, and had kept a good house for three generations, in which there had naturally been much intermarrying with neighbours more or less decidedly genteel. Mr. Vincy's sister had made a wealthy match in accepting Mr. Bulstrode, who, however, as a man not born in the town, and altogether of dimly-known origin, was considered to have done well in uniting himself with a real Middlemarch family; on the other hand, Mr. Vincy had descended a little, having taken an innkeeper's daughter. But on this side too there was a cheering sense of money; for Mrs. Vincy's sister had been second wife to rich old Mr. Featherstone, and had died childless years ago, so that her nephews and nieces might be supposed to touch the affections of the widower. And it happened that Mr. Bulstrode and Mr. Featherstone, two of Peacock's most important patients, had, from different causes, given an especially good reception to his successor, who had raised some partisanship as well as discussion. Mr. Wrench, medical attendant to the Vincy family, very early had grounds for thinking lightly of Lydgate's professional discretion, and there was no report about him which was not retailed at the Vincys', where visitors were frequent. Mr. Vincy was more inclined to general good-fellowship than to taking sides, but there was no need for him to be hasty in making any new man's acquaintance. Rosamond silently wished that her father would invite Mr. Lydgate. She was tired of the faces and figures she had always been used to—the various irregular profiles and gaits and turns of phrase distinguishing those Middlemarch young men whom she had known as boys. She had been at school with girls of higher position, whose brothers, she felt sure, it would have been possible for her to be more interested in, than in these inevitable Middlemarch companions. But she would not have chosen to mention her wish to her father; and he, for his part, was in no hurry on the subject. An alderman about to be mayor must by-and-by enlarge his dinner parties, but at present there were plenty of guests at his well-spread table.

That table often remained covered with the relics of the family breakfast long after Mr. Vincy had gone with his second son to the warehouse, and when Miss Morgan was already far on in morning lessons with the younger girls in the school-room It awaited the family laggard, who found any sort of inconvenience (to others) less disagreeable than getting up when he was called. This was the case one morning of the October in which we have lately seen Mr. Casaubon visiting the Grange; and though the room was a little overheated with the fire, which had sent the spaniel panting to a remote corner, Rosamond, for some reason, continued to sit at her embroidery longer than usual, now and then giving herself a little shake, and laying her work on her knee to contemplate it with an air of hesitating weariness. Her mamma, who had returned from an excursion to the kitchen, sat on the other side of the small work-table with an air of more entire placidity, until, the clock again giving notice that it was going to strike, she looked up from the lace-mending which was occupying her plump fingers and rang the bell.

"Knock at Mr. Fred's door again, Pritchard, and tell him it has struck half-past ten."

This was said without any change in the radiant good-humour of Mrs. Vincy's face, in which forty-five years had delved neither angles nor parallels; and pushing back her pink cap-strings, she let her work rest on her lap, while she looked admiringly at her daughter.

"Mamma," said Rosamond, "when Fred comes down I wish you would not let him have red herrings. I cannot bear the smell of them all over the house at this hour of the morning."

"Oh, my dear, you are so hard on your brothers! It is the only fault I have to find with you. You are the sweetest temper in the world, but you are so tetchy with your brothers."

"Not tetchy, mamma: you never hear me speak in an unladylike way."

"Well, but you want to deny them things."

"Brothers are so unpleasant."

"Oh, my dear, you must allow for young men. Be thankful if they have good hearts. A woman must learn to put up with little things. You will be married some day."

"Not to any one who is like Fred."

"Don't decry your own brother, my dear. Few young men have less against them, although he couldn't take his degree—I'm sure I can't understand why, for he seems to me most clever. And you know yourself he was thought equal to the best society at college. So particular as you are, my dear, I wonder you are not glad to have such a gentlemanly young man for a brother. You are always finding fault with Bob because he is not Fred."

"Oh no, mamma, only because he is Bob."

"Well, my dear, you will not find any Middlemarch young man who has not something against him."

"But"—here Rosamond's face broke into a smile which suddenly revealed two dimples. She herself thought unfavourably of these dimples and smiled little in general society. "But I shall not marry any Middlemarch young man."

"So it seems, my love, for you have as good as refused the pick of them; and if there's better to be had, I'm sure there's no girl better deserves it."

"Excuse me, mamma—I wish you would not say, 'the pick of them.'"

"Why, what else are they?"

"I mean, mamma, it is rather a vulgar expression."

"Very likely, my dear; I never was a good speaker. What should I say?"

"The best of them."

"Why, that seems just as plain and common. If I had had time to think, I should have said, 'the most superior young men.' But with your education you must know."

"What must Rosy know, mother?" said Mr. Fred, who had slid in unobserved through the half-open door while the ladies were bending over their work, and now going up to the fire stood with his back towards it, warming the soles of his slippers.

"Whether it's right to say 'superior young men,'" said Mrs. Vincy, ringing the bell.

"Oh, there are so many superior teas and sugars now. Superior is getting to be shopkeepers' slang."

"Are you beginning to dislike slang, then?" said Rosamond, with mild gravity.

"Only the wrong sort. All choice of words is slang. It marks a class."

"There is correct English: that is not slang."

"I beg your pardon: correct English is the slang of prigs who write history and essays. And the strongest slang of all is the slang of poets."

"You will say anything, Fred, to gain your point."

"Well, tell me whether it is slang or poetry to call an ox a *leg-plaiter*."

"Of course you can call it poetry if you like."

"Aha, Miss Rosy, you don't know Homer from slang. I shall invent a new game; I shall write bits of slang and poetry on slips, and give them to you to separate."

"Dear me, how amusing it is to hear young people talk!" said Mrs. Vincy, with cheerful admiration.

"Have you got nothing else for my breakfast, Pritchard?" said Fred, to the servant who brought in coffee and buttered toast; while he walked round the table surveying the ham, potted beef, and other cold remnants, with an air of silent rejection, and polite forbearance from signs of disgust.

"Should you like eggs, sir?"

"Eggs, no! Bring me a grilled bone."

"Really, Fred," said Rosamond, when the servant had left the room, "if you must have hot things for breakfast, I wish you would come down earlier. You can get up at six o'clock to go out hunting; I cannot understand why you find it so difficult to get up on other mornings."

"That is *your* want of understanding, Rosy. I can get up to go hunting because I like it."

"What would you think of me if I came down two hours after every one else and ordered grilled bone?"

"I should think you were an uncommonly fast young lady," said Fred, eating his toast with the utmost composure.

"I cannot see why brothers are to make themselves disagreeable, any more than sisters."

"I don't make myself disagreeable; it is you who find me so. Disagreeable is a word that describes your feelings and not my actions."

"I think it describes the smell of grilled bone."

"Not at all. It describes a sensation in your little nose associated with certain finicking notions which are the classics of Mrs. Lemon's school. Look at my mother: you don't see her objecting to everything except what she does herself. She is my notion of a pleasant woman."

"Bless you both, my dears, and don't quarrel," said Mrs. Vincy, with motherly cordiality. "Come, Fred, tell us all about the new doctor. How is your uncle pleased with him?"

"Pretty well, I think. He asks Lydgate all sorts of questions and then screws up his face while he hears the answers, as if they were pinching his toes. That's his way. Ah, here comes my grilled bone."

"But how came you to stay out so late, my dear? You only said you were going to your uncle's."

"Oh, I dined at Plymdale's. We had whist. Lydgate was there too."

"And what do you think of him? He is very gentlemanly, I suppose. They say he is of excellent family—his relations quite county people."

"Yes," said Fred. "There was a Lydgate at John's who spent no end of money. I find this man is a second cousin of his. But rich men may have very poor devils for second cousins."

"It always makes a difference, though, to be of good family," said Rosamond, with a tone of decision which showed that she had thought on this subject. Rosamond felt that she might have been happier if she had not been the daughter of a Middlemarch manufacturer. She disliked anything which reminded her that her mother's father had been an innkeeper. Certainly any one remembering the fact might think that Mrs. Vincy had the air of a very handsome good-humoured landlady, accustomed to the most capricious orders of gentlemen.

"I thought it was odd his name was Tertius," said the bright-faced matron, "but of course it's a name in the family. But now, tell us exactly what sort of man he is."

"Oh, tallish, dark, clever—talks well—rather a prig, I think."

"I never can make out what you mean by a prig," said Rosamond.

"A fellow who wants to show that he has opinions."

"Why, my dear, doctors must have opinions," said Mrs. Vincy. "What are they there for else?"

"Yes, mother, the opinions they are paid for. But a prig is a fellow who is always making you a present of his opinions."

"I suppose Mary Garth admires Mr. Lydgate," said Rosamond, not without a touch of innuendo.

"Really, I can't say," said Fred, rather glumly, as he left the table, and taking up a novel which he had brought down with him, threw himself into an arm-chair. "If you are jealous of her, go oftener to Stone Court yourself and eclipse her."

"I wish you would not be so vulgar, Fred. If you have finished, pray ring the bell."

"It is true, though—what your brother says, Rosamond," Mrs. Vincy began, when the servant had cleared the table. "It is a thousand pities you haven't patience to go and see your uncle more, so proud of you as he is, and wanted you to live with him. There's no knowing what he might have done for you as well as for Fred. God knows, I'm fond of having you at home with me, but I can part with my children for their good. And now it stands to reason that your uncle Featherstone will do something for Mary Garth."

"Mary Garth can bear being at Stone Court, because she likes that better than being a governess," said Rosamond, folding up her work. "I would rather not have anything left to me if I must earn it by enduring much of my uncle's cough and his ugly relations."

"He can't be long for this world, my dear; I wouldn't hasten his end, but what with asthma and that inward complaint, let us hope there is something better for him in another. And I have no ill-will towards Mary Garth, but there's justice to be thought of. And Mr. Featherstone's first wife brought him no money, as my sister did. Her nieces and nephews can't have so much claim as my sister's. And I must say I think Mary Garth a dreadful plain girl—more fit for a governess."

"Every one would not agree with you there, mother," said Fred, who seemed to be able to read and listen too.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Vincy, wheeling skilfully, "if she *had* some fortune left her,—a man marries his wife's relations, and the Garths are so poor, and live in such a small way. But I shall leave you to your studies, my dear; for I must go and do some shopping."

"Fred's studies are not very deep," said Rosamond, rising with her mamma, "he is only reading a novel."

"Well, well, by-and-by he'll go to his Latin and things," said Mrs. Vincy, soothingly, stroking her son's head. "There's a fire in the smoking-room on purpose. It's your father's wish, you know—Fred, my dear—and I always tell him you will be good, and go to college again to take your degree."

Fred drew his mother's hand down to his lips, but said nothing.

"I suppose you are not going out riding to-day?" said Rosamond, lingering a little after her mamma was gone.

"No; why?"

"Papa says I may have the chestnut to ride now."

"You can go with me to-morrow, if you like. Only I am going to Stone Court, remember."

"I want the ride so much, it is indifferent to me where we go." Rosamond really wished to go to Stone Court, of all other places.

"Oh, I say, Rosy," said Fred, as she was passing out of the room, "if you are going to the piano, let me come and play some airs with you."

"Pray do not ask me this morning."

"Why not this morning?"

"Really, Fred, I wish you would leave off playing the flute. A man looks very silly playing the flute. And you play so out of tune."

"When next any one makes love to you, Miss Rosamond, I will tell him how obliging you are."

"Why should you expect me to oblige you by hearing you play the flute, any more than I should expect you to oblige me by not playing it?"

"And why should you expect me to take you out riding?"

This question led to an adjustment, for Rosamond had set her mind on that particular ride.

So Fred was gratified with nearly an hour's practice of "Ar hyd y nos," "Ye banks and braes," and other favourite airs from his "Instructor on the Flute"; a wheezy performance, into which he threw much ambition and an irrepressible hopefulness.

CHAPTER XII

"He had more tow on his distaffe
Than Gerveis knew."
—Chaucer.

The ride to Stone Court, which Fred and Rosamond took the next morning, lay through a pretty bit of midland landscape, almost all meadows and pastures, with hedgerows still allowed to grow in bushy beauty and to spread out coral fruit for the birds. Little details gave each field a particular physiognomy, dear to the eyes that have looked on them from childhood: the pool in the corner where the grasses were dank and trees leaned whisperingly; the great oak shadowing a bare place in mid-pasture; the high bank where the ash-trees grew; the sudden slope of the old marl-pit making a red background for the burdock; the huddled roofs and ricks of the homestead without a traceable way of approach; the grey gate and fences against the depths of the bordering wood; and the stray hovel, its old, old thatch full of mossy hills and valleys with wondrous modulations of light and shadow such as we travel far to see in later life, and see larger, but not more beautiful. These are the things that make the gamut of joy in landscape to midland-bred souls—the things they toddled among, or perhaps learned by heart standing between their father's knees while he drove leisurely.

But the road, even the byroad, was excellent; for Lowick, as we have seen, was not a parish of muddy lanes and poor tenants; and it was into Lowick parish that Fred and Rosamond entered after a couple of miles' riding. Another mile would bring them to Stone Court, and at the end of the first half, the house was already visible, looking as if it had been arrested in its growth toward a stone mansion by an unexpected budding of farm-buildings on its left flank, which had hindered it from becoming anything more than the substantial dwelling of a gentleman farmer. It was not the less agreeable an object in the distance for the cluster of pinnacled corn-ricks which balanced the fine row of walnuts on the right.

Presently it was possible to discern something that might be a gig on the circular drive before the front door.

"Dear me," said Rosamond, "I hope none of my uncle's horrible relations are there."

"They are, though. That is Mrs. Waule's gig—the last yellow gig left, I should think. When I see Mrs. Waule in it, I understand how yellow can have been worn for mourning. That gig seems to me more funereal than a hearse. But then Mrs. Waule always has black crape on. How does she manage it, Rosy? Her friends can't always be dying."

"I don't know at all. And she is not in the least evangelical," said Rosamond, reflectively, as if that religious point of view would have fully accounted for perpetual crape. "And not poor," she added, after a moment's pause.

"No, by George! They are as rich as Jews, those Waules and Featherstones; I mean, for people like them, who don't want to spend anything. And yet they hang about my uncle like vultures, and are afraid of a farthing going away from their side of the family. But I believe he hates them all."

The Mrs. Waule who was so far from being admirable in the eyes of these distant connections, had happened to say this very morning (not at all with a defiant air, but in a low, muffled, neutral tone, as of a voice heard through cotton wool) that she did not wish "to enjoy their good opinion." She was seated, as she observed, on her own brother's hearth, and had been Jane Featherstone five-and-twenty years before she had been Jane Waule, which entitled her to speak when her own brother's name had been made free with by those who had no right to it.

"What are you driving at there?" said Mr. Featherstone, holding his stick between his knees and settling his wig, while he gave her a momentary sharp glance, which seemed to react on him like a draught of cold air and set him coughing.

Mrs. Waule had to defer her answer till he was quiet again, till Mary Garth had supplied him with fresh syrup, and he had begun to rub the gold knob of his stick, looking bitterly at the fire. It was a bright fire, but it made no difference to the chill-looking purplish tint of Mrs. Waule's face, which was as neutral as her voice; having mere chinks for eyes, and lips that hardly moved in speaking.

"The doctors can't master that cough, brother. It's just like what I have; for I'm your own sister, constitution and everything. But, as I was saying, it's a pity Mrs. Vincy's family can't be better conducted."

"Tchah! you said nothing o' the sort. You said somebody had made free with my name."

"And no more than can be proved, if what everybody says is true. My brother Solomon tells me it's the talk up and down in Middlemarch how unsteady young Vincy is, and has been for ever gambling at billiards since home he came."

"Nonsense! What's a game at billiards? It's a good gentlemanly game; and young Vincy is not a clodhopper. If your son John took to billiards, now, he'd make a fool of himself."

"Your nephew John never took to billiards or any other game, brother, and is far from losing hundreds of pounds, which, if what everybody says is true, must be found somewhere else than out of Mr. Vincy the father's pocket. For they say he's been losing money for years, though nobody would think so, to see him go coursing and keeping open house as they do. And I've heard say Mr. Bulstrode condemns Mrs. Vincy beyond anything for her flightiness, and spoiling her children so."

"What's Bulstrode to me? I don't bank with him."

"Well, Mrs. Bulstrode is Mr. Vincy's own sister, and they do say that Mr. Vincy mostly trades on the Bank money; and you may see yourself, brother, when a woman past forty has pink strings always flying, and that light way of laughing at everything, it's very unbecoming. But indulging your children is one thing, and finding money to pay their debts is another. And it's openly said that young Vincy has raised money on his expectations. I don't say what expectations. Miss Garth hears me, and is welcome to tell again. I know young people hang together."

"No, thank you, Mrs. Waule," said Mary Garth. "I dislike hearing scandal too much to wish to repeat it."

Mr. Featherstone rubbed the knob of his stick and made a brief convulsive show of laughter, which had much the same genuineness as an old whist-player's chuckle over a bad hand. Still looking at the fire, he said—

"And who pretends to say Fred Vincy hasn't got expectations? Such a fine, spirited fellow is like enough to have 'em."

There was a slight pause before Mrs. Waule replied, and when she did so, her voice seemed to be slightly moistened with tears, though her face was still dry.

"Whether or no, brother, it is naturally painful to me and my brother Solomon to hear your name made free with, and your complaint being such as may carry you off sudden, and people who are no more Featherstones than the Merry-Andrew at the fair, openly reckoning on your property coming to *them*. And me your own sister, and Solomon your own brother! And if that's to be it, what has it pleased the Almighty to make families for?" Here Mrs. Waule's tears fell, but with moderation.

"Come, out with it, Jane!" said Mr. Featherstone, looking at her. "You mean to say, Fred Vincy has been getting somebody to advance him money on what he says he knows about my will, eh?"

"I never said so, brother" (Mrs. Waule's voice had again become dry and unshaken). "It was told me by my brother Solomon last night when he called coming from market to give me advice about the old wheat, me being a widow, and my son John only three-and-twenty, though steady beyond anything. And he had it from most undeniable authority, and not one, but many."

"Stuff and nonsense! I don't believe a word of it. It's all a got-up story. Go to the window, missy I thought I heard a horse. See if the doctor's coming."

"Not got up by me, brother, nor yet by Solomon, who, whatever else he may be—and I don't deny he has oddities—has made his will and parted his property equal between such kin as he's friends with; though, for my part, I think there are times when some should be considered more than others. But Solomon makes it no secret what he means to do."

"The more fool he!" said Mr. Featherstone, with some difficulty; breaking into a severe fit of coughing that required Mary Garth to stand near him, so that she did not find out whose horses they were which presently paused stamping on the gravel before the door.

Before Mr. Featherstone's cough was quiet, Rosamond entered, bearing up her riding-habit with much grace. She bowed ceremoniously to Mrs. Waule, who said stiffly, "How do you do, miss?" smiled and nodded silently to Mary, and remained standing till the coughing should cease, and allow her uncle to notice her.

"Heyday, miss," he said at last, "you have a fine colour. Where's Fred?"

"Seeing about the horses. He will be in presently."

"Sit down, sit down. Mrs. Waule, you'd better go."

Even those neighbours who had called Peter Featherstone an old fox, had never accused him of being insincerely polite, and his sister was quite used to the peculiar absence of ceremony with which he marked his sense of blood-relationship. Indeed, she herself was accustomed to think that entire freedom from the necessity of behaving agreeably was included in the Almighty's intentions about families. She rose slowly without any sign of resentment, and said in her usual muffled monotone, "Brother, I hope the new doctor will be able to do something for you. Solomon says there's great talk of his cleverness. I'm sure it's my wish you should be spared. And there's none more ready to nurse you than your own sister and your own nieces, if you'd only say the word. There's Rebecca, and Joanna, and Elizabeth, you know."

"Ay, ay, I remember—you'll see I've remembered 'em all—

all dark and ugly. They'd need have some money, eh? There never was any beauty in the women of our family; but the Featherstones have always had some money, and the Waules too. Waule had money too. A warm man was Waule. Ay, ay; money's a good egg; and if you've got money to leave behind you, lay it in a warm nest. Good-bye, Mrs. Waule."

Here Mr. Featherstone pulled at both sides of his wig as if he wanted to deafen himself, and his sister went away ruminating on this oracular speech of his. Notwithstanding her jealousy of the Vincys and of Mary Garth, there remained as the nethermost sediment in her mental shallows a persuasion that her brother Peter Featherstone could never leave his chief property away from his blood-relations:—else, why had the Almighty carried off his two wives both childless, after he had gained so much by manganese and things, turning up when nobody expected it?—and why was there a Lowick parish church, and the Waules and Powderells all sitting in the same pew for generations, and the Featherstone pew next to them, if, the Sunday after her brother Peter's death, everybody was to know that the property was gone out of the family? The human mind has at no period accepted a moral chaos; and so preposterous a result was not strictly conceivable. But we are frightened at much that is not strictly conceivable.

When Fred came in the old man eyed him with a peculiar twinkle, which the younger had often had reason to interpret as pride in the satisfactory details of his appearance.

"You two misses go away," said Mr. Featherstone. "I want to speak to Fred."

"Come into my room, Rosamond, you will not mind the cold for a little while," said Mary. The two girls had not only known each other in childhood, but had been at the same provincial school together (Mary as an articled pupil), so that they had many memories in common, and liked very well to talk in private. Indeed, this *tête-à-tête* was one of Rosamond's objects in coming to Stone Court.

Old Featherstone would not begin the dialogue till the door had been closed. He continued to look at Fred with the same twinkle and with one of his habitual grimaces, alternately screwing and widening his mouth; and when he spoke, it was in a low tone, which might be taken for that of an informer ready to be bought off, rather than for the tone of an offended senior. He was not a man to feel any strong moral indignation even on account of trespasses against himself. It was natural that others should want to get an advantage over him, but then, he was a little too cunning for them.

"So, sir, you've been paying ten per cent. for money which you've promised to pay off by mortgaging my land when I'm dead and gone, eh? You put my life at a twelvemonth, say. But I can alter my will yet."

Fred blushed. He had not borrowed money in that way, for excellent reasons. But he was conscious of having spoken with some confidence (perhaps with more than he exactly remembered) about his prospect of getting Featherstone's land as a future means of paying present debts.

"I don't know what you refer to, sir. I have certainly never borrowed any money on such an insecurity. Please to explain."

"No, sir, it's you must explain. I can alter my will yet, let me tell you. I'm of sound mind—can reckon compound interest in my head, and remember every fool's name as well as I could twenty years ago. What the deuce? I'm under eighty. I say, you must contradict this story."

"I have contradicted it, sir," Fred answered, with a touch of impatience, not remembering that his uncle did not verbally discriminate contradicting from disproving, though no one was further from confounding the two ideas than old Featherstone, who often wondered that so many fools took his own assertions for proofs. "But I contradict it again. The story is a silly lie."

"Nonsense! you must bring dockiments. It comes from authority."

"Name the authority, and make him name the man of whom I borrowed the money, and then I can disprove the story."

"It's pretty good authority, I think—a man who knows most of what goes on in Middlemarch. It's that fine, religious, charitable uncle o' yours. Come now!" Here Mr. Featherstone had his peculiar inward shake which signified merriment.

"Mr. Bulstrode?"

"Who else, eh?"

"Then the story has grown into this lie out of some sermonising words he may have let fall about me. Do they pretend that he named the man who lent me the money?"

"If there is such a man, depend upon it Bulstrode knows him. But, supposing you only tried to get the money lent, and didn't get it—Bulstrode 'ud know that too. You bring me a writing from Bulstrode to say he doesn't believe you've ever promised to pay your debts out o' my land. Come now!"

Mr. Featherstone's face required its whole scale of grimaces as a muscular outlet to his silent triumph in the soundness of his faculties.

Fred felt himself to be in a disgusting dilemma.

"You must be joking, sir. Mr. Bulstrode, like other men, believes scores of things that are not true, and he has a prejudice against me. I could easily get him to write that he knew no facts in proof of the report you speak of, though it might lead to unpleasantness. But I could hardly ask him to write down what he believes or does not believe about me." Fred paused an instant, and then added, in politic appeal to his uncle's vanity, "That is hardly a thing for a gentleman to ask."

But he was disappointed in the result.

"Ay, I know what you mean. You'd sooner offend me than Bulstrode. And what's he?—he's got no land hereabout that ever I heard tell of. A speckilating fellow! He may come down any day, when the devil leaves off backing him. And that's what his religion means: he wants God A'mighty to come in. That's nonsense! There's one thing I made out pretty clear when I used to go to church—and it's this: God A'mighty sticks to the land. He promises land, and He gives land, and He makes chaps rich with corn and cattle. But you take the other side. You like Bulstrode and speckilation better than Featherstone and land."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Fred, rising, standing with his back to the fire and beating his boot with his whip. "I like neither Bulstrode nor speculation." He spoke rather sulkily, feeling himself stalemated.

"Well, well, you can do without *me*, that's pretty clear," said old Featherstone, secretly disliking the possibility that Fred would show himself at all independent. "You neither want a bit of land to make a squire of you instead of a starving parson, nor a lift of a hundred pound by the way. It's all one to me. I can make five codicils if I like, and I shall keep my bank-notes for a nest-egg. It's all one to me."

Fred coloured again. Featherstone had rarely given him presents of money, and at this moment it seemed almost harder to part with the immediate prospect of bank-notes than with the more distant prospect of the land.

"I am not ungrateful, sir. I never meant to show disregard for any kind intentions you might have towards me. On the contrary."

"Very good. Then prove it. You bring me a letter from Bulstrode saying he doesn't believe you've been cracking and promising to pay your debts out o' my land, and then, if there's any scrape you've got into, we'll see if I can back you a bit. Come now! That's a bargain. Here, give me your arm. I'll try and walk round the room."

Fred, in spite of his irritation, had kindness enough in him to be a little sorry for the unloved, unvenerated old man, who with his dropsical legs looked more than usually pitiable in walking. While giving his arm, he thought that he should not himself like to be an old fellow with his constitution breaking up; and he waited good-temperedly, first before the window to hear the wonted remarks about the guinea-fowls and the weathercock, and then before the scanty book-shelves, of which the chief glories in dark calf were Josephus, Culpepper, Klopstock's "Messiah," and several volumes of the "Gentleman's Magazine."

"Read me the names o' the books. Come now! you're a college man."

Fred gave him the titles.

"What did missy want with more books? What must you be bringing her more books for?"

"They amuse her, sir. She is very fond of reading."

"A little too fond," said Mr. Featherstone, captiously. "She was for reading when she sat with me. But I put a stop to that. She's got the newspaper to read out loud. That's enough for one day, I should think. I can't abide to see her reading to herself. You mind and not bring her any more books, do you hear?"

"Yes, sir, I hear." Fred had received this order before, and had secretly disobeyed it. He intended to disobey it again.

"Ring the bell," said Mr. Featherstone; "I want missy to come down."

Rosamond and Mary had been talking faster than their male friends. They did not think of sitting down, but stood at the toilette-table near the window while Rosamond took off her hat, adjusted her veil, and applied little touches of her finger-tips to her hair—hair of infantine fairness, neither flaxen nor yellow. Mary Garth seemed all the plainer standing at an angle between the two nymphs—the one in the glass, and the one out of it, who looked at each other with eyes of heavenly blue, deep enough to hold the most exquisite meanings an ingenious beholder could put into them, and deep enough to hide the meanings of the owner if these should happen to be less exquisite. Only a few children in Middlemarch looked blond by the side of Rosamond, and the slim figure displayed by her riding-habit had delicate undulations. In fact, most men in Middlemarch, except her brothers, held that Miss Vincy was the best girl in the world, and some called her an angel. Mary Garth, on the contrary, had the aspect of an ordinary sinner: she was brown; her curly dark hair was rough and stubborn; her stature was low; and it would not be true to declare, in satisfactory antithesis, that she had all the virtues. Plainness has its peculiar temptations and vices quite as much as beauty; it is apt either to feign amiability or, not feigning it, to show all the repulsiveness of discontent: at any rate, to be called an ugly thing in contrast with that lovely creature your companion, is apt to produce some effect beyond a sense of fine veracity and fitness in the phrase. At the age of two-and-twenty Mary had certainly not attained that perfect good sense and good principle which are usually recommended to the less fortunate girl, as if they were to be obtained in quantities ready mixed, with a flavour of resignation as required. Her shrewdness had a streak of satiric bitterness continually renewed and never carried utterly out of sight, except by a strong current of gratitude towards those who, instead of telling her that she ought to be contented, did something to make her so. Advancing womanhood had tempered her plainness, which was of a good human sort, such as the mothers of our race have very commonly worn in all latitudes under a more or less becoming headgear. Rembrandt would have painted her with pleasure, and would have made her broad features look out of the canvas with intelligent honesty. For honesty, truth-telling fairness, was Mary's reigning virtue: she neither tried to create illusions, nor indulged in them for her own behoof, and when she was in a good mood she had humour enough in her to laugh at herself. When she and Rosamond happened both to be reflected in the glass, she said laughingly—

"What a brown patch I am by the side of you, Rosy! You are the most unbecoming companion."

"Oh no! No one thinks of your appearance, you are so sensible and useful, Mary. Beauty is of very little consequence in reality," said Rosamond, turning her head towards Mary, but with eyes swerving towards the new view of her neck in the glass.

"You mean *my* beauty," said Mary, rather sardonically.

Rosamond thought, "Poor Mary, she takes the kindest things ill." Aloud she said, "What have you been doing lately?"

"I? Oh, minding the house—pouring out syrup—pretending to be amiable and contented—learning to have a bad opinion of everybody."

"It is a wretched life for you."

"No," said Mary, curtly, with a little toss of her head. "I think my life is pleasanter than your Miss Morgan's."

"Yes; but Miss Morgan is so uninteresting, and not young."

"She is interesting to herself, I suppose; and I am not at all sure that everything gets easier as one gets older."

"No," said Rosamond, reflectively; "one wonders what such people do, without any prospect. To be sure, there is religion as a support. But," she added, dimpling, "it is very different with you, Mary. You may have an offer."

"Has any one told you he means to make me one?"

"Of course not. I mean, there is a gentleman who may fall in love with you, seeing you almost every day."

A certain change in Mary's face was chiefly determined by the resolve not to show any change.

"Does that always make people fall in love?" she answered, carelessly; "it seems to me quite as often a reason for detesting each other."

"Not when they are interesting and agreeable. I hear that Mr. Lydgate is both."

"Oh, Mr. Lydgate!" said Mary, with an unmistakable lapse into indifference. "You want to know something about him," she added, not choosing to indulge Rosamond's indirectness.

"Merely, how you like him."

"There is no question of liking at present. My liking always wants some little kindness to kindle it. I am not magnanimous enough to like people who speak to me without seeming to see me."

"Is he so haughty?" said Rosamond, with heightened satisfaction. "You know that he is of good family?"

"No; he did not give that as a reason."

"Mary! you are the oddest girl. But what sort of looking man is he? Describe him to me."

"How can one describe a man? I can give you an inventory: heavy eyebrows, dark eyes, a straight nose, thick dark hair, large solid white hands—and—let me see—oh, an exquisite cambric pocket-handkerchief. But you will see him. You know this is about the time of his visits."

Rosamond blushed a little, but said, meditatively, "I rather like a haughty manner. I cannot endure a rattling young man."

"I did not tell you that Mr. Lydgate was haughty; but *il y en a pour tous les goûts*, as little Mamselle used to say, and if any girl can choose the particular sort of conceit she would like, I should think it is you, Rosy."

"Haughtiness is not conceit; I call Fred conceited."

"I wish no one said any worse of him. He should be more careful. Mrs. Waule has been telling uncle that Fred is very unsteady." Mary spoke from a girlish impulse which got the better of her judgment. There was a vague uneasiness associated with the word "unsteady" which she hoped Rosamond might say something to dissipate. But she purposely abstained from mentioning Mrs. Waule's more special insinuation.

"Oh, Fred is horrid!" said Rosamond. She would not have allowed herself so unsuitable a word to any one but Mary.

"What do you mean by horrid?"

"He is so idle, and makes papa so angry, and says he will not take orders."

"I think Fred is quite right."

"How can you say he is quite right, Mary? I thought you had more sense of religion."

"He is not fit to be a clergyman."

"But he ought to be fit."

"Well, then, he is not what he ought to be. I know some other people who are in the same case."

"But no one approves of them. I should not like to marry a clergyman; but there must be clergymen."

"It does not follow that Fred must be one."

"But when papa has been at the expense of educating him for it! And only suppose, if he should have no fortune left him?"

"I can suppose that very well," said Mary, dryly.

"Then I wonder you can defend Fred," said Rosamond. inclined to push this point.

"I don't defend him," said Mary, laughing; "I would defend any parish from having him for a clergyman."

"But of course if he were a clergyman, he must be different."

"Yes, he would be a great hypocrite; and he is not that yet."

"It is of no use saying anything to you, Mary. You always take Fred's part."

"Why should I not take his part?" said Mary, lighting up. "He would take mine. He is the only person who takes the least trouble to oblige me."

"You make me feel very uncomfortable, Mary," said Rosamond, with her gravest mildness; "I would not tell mamma for the world."

"What would you not tell her?" said Mary, angrily.

"Pray do not go into a rage, Mary," said Rosamond, mildly as ever.

"If your mamma is afraid that Fred will make me an offer, tell her that I would not marry him if he asked me. But he is not going to do so, that I am aware. He certainly never has asked me."

"Mary, you are always so violent."

"And you are always so exasperating."

"I? What can you blame me for?"

"Oh, blameless people are always the most exasperating. There is the bell—I think we must go down."

"I did not mean to quarrel," said Rosamond, putting on her hat.

"Quarrel? Nonsense; we have not quarrelled. If one is not to get into a rage sometimes, what is the good of being friends?"

"Am I to repeat what you have said?"

"Just as you please. I never say what I am afraid of having repeated. But let us go down."

Mr. Lydgate was rather late this morning, but the visitors stayed long enough to see him; for Mr. Featherstone asked Rosamond to sing to him, and she herself was so kind as to propose a second favourite song of his—"Flow on, thou shining river"—after she had sung "Home, sweet home" (which she detested). This hard-headed old Overreach approved of the sentimental song, as the suitable garnish for girls, and also as fundamentally fine, sentiment being the right thing for a song.

Mr. Featherstone was still applauding the last performance, and assuring Missy that her voice was as clear as a blackbird's, when Mr. Lydgate's horse passed the window.

His dull expectation of the usual disagreeable routine with an aged patient—who can hardly believe that medicine would not "set him up" if the doctor were only clever enough—added to his general disbelief in Middlemarch charms, made a doubly effective background to this vision of Rosamond, whom old Featherstone made haste ostentatiously to introduce as his niece, though he had never thought it worth while to speak of Mary Garth in that light. Nothing escaped Lydgate in Rosamond's graceful behaviour: how delicately she waived the notice which the old man's want of taste had thrust upon her by a quiet gravity, not showing her dimples on the wrong occasion, but showing them afterwards in speaking to Mary, to whom she addressed herself with so much good-natured interest, that Lydgate, after quickly examining Mary more fully than he had done before, saw an adorable kindness in Rosamond's eyes. But Mary from some cause looked rather out of temper.

"Miss Rosy has been singing me a song—you've nothing to say against that, eh, doctor?" said Mr. Featherstone. "I like it better than your physic."

"That has made me forget how the time was going," said Rosamond, rising to reach her hat, which she had laid aside before singing, so that her flower-like head on its white stem was seen in perfection above her riding-habit. "Fred, we must really go."

"Very good," said Fred, who had his own reasons for not being in the best spirits, and wanted to get away.

"Miss Vincy is a musician?" said Lydgate, following her with his eyes. (Every nerve and muscle in Rosamond was adjusted to the consciousness that she was being looked at. She was by nature an actress of parts that entered into her *physique*: she even acted her own character, and so well, that she did not know it to be precisely her own.)

"The best in Middlemarch, I'll be bound," said Mr. Featherstone, "let the next be who she will. Eh, Fred? Speak up for your sister."

"I'm afraid I'm out of court, sir. My evidence would be good for nothing."

"Middlemarch has not a very high standard, uncle," said Rosamond, with a pretty lightness, going towards her whip, which lay at a distance.

Lydgate was quick in anticipating her. He reached the whip before she did, and turned to present it to her. She bowed and looked at him: he of course was looking at her, and their eyes met with that peculiar meeting which is never arrived at by effort, but seems like a sudden divine clearance of haze. I think Lydgate turned a little paler than usual, but Rosamond blushed deeply and felt a certain astonishment. After that, she was really anxious to go, and did not know what sort of stupidity her uncle was talking of when she went to shake hands with him.

Yet this result, which she took to be a mutual impression, called falling in love, was just what Rosamond had contemplated beforehand. Ever since that important new arrival in Middlemarch she had woven a little future, of which something like this scene was the necessary beginning. Strangers, whether wrecked and clinging to a raft, or duly escorted and accompanied by portmanteaus, have always had a circumstantial fascination for the virgin mind, against which native merit has urged itself in vain. And a stranger was absolutely necessary to Rosamond's social romance, which had always turned on a lover and bridegroom who was not a Middlemarcher, and who had no connections at all like her own: of late, indeed, the construction seemed to demand that he should somehow be related to a baronet. Now that she and the stranger had met, reality proved much more moving than anticipation, and Rosamond could not admit that this was the great epoch of her life. She judged of her own symptoms as those of awakening love, and she held it still more natural that Mr. Lydgate should have fallen in love at first sight of her. These things happened so often at balls, and why not by the morning light, when the complexion showed all the better for it? Rosamond, though no older than Mary, was rather used to being fallen in love with; but she, for her part, had remained indifferent and fastidiously critical towards both fresh sprig and faded bachelor. And here was Mr. Lydgate suddenly corresponding to her ideal, being altogether foreign to Middlemarch, carrying a certain air of distinction congruous with good family, and possessing connections which offered vistas of that middle-class heaven, rank; a man of talent, also, whom it would be especially delightful to enslave: in fact, a man who had touched her nature quite newly, and brought a vivid interest into her life which was better than any fancied "might-be" such as she was in the habit of opposing to the actual.

Thus, in riding home, both the brother and the sister were preoccupied and inclined to be silent. Rosamond, whose basis for her structure had the usual airy slightness, was of remarkably detailed and realistic imagination when the foundation had been once presupposed; and before they had ridden a mile she was far on in the costume and introductions of her wedded life, having determined on her house in Middlemarch, and foreseen the visits she would pay to her husband's high-bred relatives at a distance, whose finished manners she could appropriate as thoroughly as she had done her school accomplishments, preparing herself thus for vaguer elevations which might ultimately come. There was nothing financial, still less sordid, in her previsions: she cared about what were considered refinements, and not about the money that was to pay for them.

Fred's mind, on the other hand, was busy with an anxiety which even his ready hopefulness could not immediately quell. He saw no way of eluding Featherstone's stupid demand without incurring consequences which he liked less even than the task of fulfilling it. His father was already out of humour with him, and would be still more so if he were the occasion of any additional coolness between his own family and the Bulstrodes. Then, he himself hated having to go and speak to his uncle Bulstrode, and perhaps after drinking wine he had said many foolish things about Featherstone's property, and these had been magnified by report. Fred felt that he made a wretched figure as a fellow who bragged about expectations from a queer old miser like Featherstone, and went to beg for certificates at his bidding. But—those expectations! He really had them, and he saw no agreeable alternative if he gave them up; besides, he had lately made a debt which galled him extremely, and old Featherstone had almost bargained to pay it off. The whole affair was miserably small: his debts were small, even his expectations were not anything so very magnificent. Fred had known men to whom he would have been ashamed of confessing the smallness of his scrapes. Such ruminations naturally produced a streak of misanthropic bitterness. To be born the son of a Middlemarch manufacturer, and inevitable heir to nothing in particular, while such men as Mainwaring and Vyan—certainly life was a poor business, when a spirited young fellow, with a good appetite for the best of everything, had so poor an outlook.

It had not occurred to Fred that the introduction of Bulstrode's name in the matter was a fiction of old Featherstone's; nor could this have made any difference to his position. He saw plainly enough that the old man wanted to exercise his power by tormenting him a little, and also probably to get some satisfaction out of seeing him on unpleasant terms with Bulstrode. Fred fancied that he saw to the bottom of his uncle Featherstone's soul, though in reality half what he saw there was no more than the reflex of his own inclinations. The difficult task of knowing another soul is not for young gentlemen whose consciousness is chiefly made up of their own wishes.

Fred's main point of debate with himself was, whether he should tell his father, or try to get through the affair without his father's knowledge. It was probably Mrs. Waule who had been talking about him; and if Mary Garth had repeated Mrs. Waule's report to Rosamond, it would be sure to reach his father, who would as surely question him about it. He said to Rosamond, as they slackened their pace—

"Rosy, did Mary tell you that Mrs. Waule had said anything about me?"

"Yes, indeed, she did."

"What?"

"That you were very unsteady."

"Was that all?"

"I should think that was enough, Fred."

"You are sure she said no more?"

"Mary mentioned nothing else. But really, Fred, I think you ought to be ashamed."

"Oh, fudge! don't lecture me. What did Mary say about it?"

"I am not obliged to tell you. You care so very much what Mary says, and you are too rude to allow me to speak."

"Of course I care what Mary says. She is the best girl I know."

"I should never have thought she was a girl to fall in love with."

"How do you know what men would fall in love with? Girls never know."

"At least, Fred, let me advise *you* not to fall in love with her, for she says she would not marry you if you asked her."

"She might have waited till I did ask her."

"I knew it would nettle you, Fred."

"Not at all. She would not have said so if you had not provoked her."

Before reaching home, Fred concluded that he would tell the whole affair as simply as possible to his father, who might perhaps take on himself the unpleasant business of speaking to Bulstrode.

BOOK II

OLD AND YOUNG

CHAPTER XIII

1st. Gent. How class your man?—as better than the most,
Or, seeming better, worse beneath that cloak?
As saint or knave, pilgrim or hypocrite?
2nd Gent. Nay, tell me how you class your wealth of books,
The drifted relics of all time. As well
Sort them at once by size and livery:
Vellum, tall copies, and the common calf
Will hardly cover more diversity
Than all your labels cunningly devised
To class your unread authors.

In consequence of what he had heard from Fred, Mr. Vincy determined to speak with Mr. Bulstrode in his private room at the Bank at half-past one, when he was usually free from other callers. But a visitor had come in at one o'clock, and Mr. Bulstrode had so much to say to him, that there was little chance of the interview being over in half an hour. The banker's speech was fluent, but it was also copious, and he used up an appreciable amount of time in brief meditative pauses. Do not imagine his sickly aspect to have been of the yellow, black-haired sort: he had a pale blond skin, thin grey-besprinkled brown hair, light-grey eyes, and a large forehead. Loud men called his subdued tone an undertone, and sometimes implied that it was inconsistent with openness; though there seems to be no reason why a loud man should not be given to concealment of anything except his own voice, unless it can be shown that Holy Writ has placed the seat of candour in the lungs. Mr. Bulstrode had also a deferential bending attitude in listening, and an apparently fixed attentiveness in his eyes which made those persons who thought themselves worth hearing infer that he was seeking the utmost improvement from their discourse. Others, who expected to make no great figure, disliked this kind of moral lantern turned on them. If you are not proud of your cellar, there is no thrill of satisfaction in seeing your guest hold up his wine-glass to the light and look judicial. Such joys are reserved for conscious merit. Hence Mr. Bulstrode's close attention was not agreeable to the publicans and sinners in Middlemarch; it was attributed by some to his being a Pharisee, and by others to his being Evangelical. Less superficial reasoners among them wished to know who his father and grandfather were, observing that five-and-twenty years ago nobody had ever heard of a Bulstrode in Middlemarch. To his present visitor, Lydgate, the scrutinising look was a matter of indifference: he simply formed an unfavourable opinion of the banker's constitution, and concluded that he had an eager inward life with little enjoyment of tangible things.

"I shall be exceedingly obliged if you will look in on me here occasionally, Mr. Lydgate," the banker observed, after a brief pause. "If, as I dare to hope, I have the privilege of finding you a valuable coadjutor in the interesting matter of hospital management, there will be many questions which we shall need to discuss in private. As to the new hospital, which is nearly finished, I shall consider what you have said about the advantages of the special destination for fevers. The decision will rest with me, for though Lord Medlicote has given the land and timber for the building, he is not disposed to give his personal attention to the object."

"There are few things better worth the pains in a provincial town like this," said Lydgate. "A fine fever hospital in addition to the old infirmary might be the nucleus of a medical school here, when once we get our medical reforms; and what would do more for medical education than the spread of such schools over the country? A born provincial man who has a grain of public spirit as well as a few ideas, should do what he can to resist the rush of everything that is a little better than common towards London. Any valid professional aims may often find a freer, if not a richer field, in the provinces."

One of Lydgate's gifts was a voice habitually deep and sonorous, yet capable of becoming very low and gentle at the right moment. About his ordinary bearing there was a certain fling, a fearless expectation of success, a confidence in his own powers and integrity much fortified by contempt for petty obstacles or seductions of which he had had no experience. But this proud openness was made lovable by an expression of unaffected good-will. Mr. Bulstrode perhaps liked him the better for the difference between them in pitch and manners; he certainly liked him the better, as Rosamond did, for being a stranger in Middlemarch. One can begin so many things with a new person!—even begin to be a better man.

“I shall rejoice to furnish your zeal with fuller opportunities,” Mr. Bulstrode answered; “I mean, by confiding to you the superintendence of my new hospital, should a maturer knowledge favour that issue, for I am determined that so great an object shall not be shackled by our two physicians. Indeed, I am encouraged to consider your advent to this town as a gracious indication that a more manifest blessing is now to be awarded to my efforts, which have hitherto been much withstood. With regard to the old infirmary, we have gained the initial point—I mean your election. And now I hope you will not shrink from incurring a certain amount of jealousy and dislike from your professional brethren by presenting yourself as a reformer.”

“I will not profess bravery,” said Lydgate, smiling, “but I acknowledge a good deal of pleasure in fighting, and I should not care for my profession, if I did not believe that better methods were to be found and enforced there as well as everywhere else.”

“The standard of that profession is low in Middlemarch, my dear sir,” said the banker. “I mean in knowledge and skill; not in social status, for our medical men are most of them connected with respectable townspeople here. My own imperfect health has induced me to give some attention to those palliative resources which the divine mercy has placed within our reach. I have consulted eminent men in the metropolis, and I am painfully aware of the backwardness under which medical treatment labours in our provincial districts.”

“Yes;—with our present medical rules and education, one must be satisfied now and then to meet with a fair practitioner. As to all the higher questions which determine the starting-point of a diagnosis—as to the philosophy of medical evidence—any glimmering of these can only come from a scientific culture of which country practitioners have usually no more notion than the man in the moon.”

Mr. Bulstrode, bending and looking intently, found the form which Lydgate had given to his agreement not quite suited to his comprehension. Under such circumstances a judicious man changes the topic and enters on ground where his own gifts may be more useful.

“I am aware,” he said, “that the peculiar bias of medical ability is towards material means. Nevertheless, Mr. Lydgate, I hope we shall not vary in sentiment as to a measure in which you are not likely to be actively concerned, but in which your sympathetic concurrence may be an aid to me. You recognise, I hope, the existence of spiritual interests in your patients?"

"Certainly I do. But those words are apt to cover different meanings to different minds."

"Precisely. And on such subjects wrong teaching is as fatal as no teaching. Now a point which I have much at heart to secure is a new regulation as to clerical attendance at the old infirmary. The building stands in Mr. Farebrother's parish. You know Mr. Farebrother?"

"I have seen him. He gave me his vote. I must call to thank him. He seems a very bright pleasant little fellow. And I understand he is a naturalist."

"Mr. Farebrother, my dear sir, is a man deeply painful to contemplate. I suppose there is not a clergyman in this country who has greater talents." Mr. Bulstrode paused and looked meditative.

"I have not yet been pained by finding any excessive talent in Middlemarch," said Lydgate, bluntly.

"What I desire," Mr. Bulstrode continued, looking still more serious, "is that Mr. Farebrother's attendance at the hospital should be superseded by the appointment of a chaplain—of Mr. Tyke, in fact—and that no other spiritual aid should be called in."

"As a medical man I could have no opinion on such a point unless I knew Mr. Tyke, and even then I should require to know the cases in which he was applied." Lydgate smiled, but he was bent on being circumspect.

"Of course you cannot enter fully into the merits of this measure at present. But"—here Mr. Bulstrode began to speak with a more chiselled emphasis—"the subject is likely to be referred to the medical board of the infirmary, and what I trust I may ask of you is, that in virtue of the co-operation between us which I now look forward to, you will not, so far as you are concerned, be influenced by my opponents in this matter."

"I hope I shall have nothing to do with clerical disputes," said Lydgate. "The path I have chosen is to work well in my own profession."

"My responsibility, Mr. Lydgate, is of a broader kind. With me, indeed, this question is one of sacred accountableness; whereas with my opponents, I have good reason to say that it is an occasion for gratifying a spirit of worldly opposition. But I shall not therefore drop one iota of my convictions, or cease to identify myself with that truth which an evil generation hates. I have devoted myself to this object of hospital-improvement, but I will boldly confess to you, Mr. Lydgate, that I should have no interest in hospitals if I believed that nothing more was concerned therein than the cure of mortal diseases. I have another ground of action, and in the face of persecution I will not conceal it."

Mr. Bulstrode's voice had become a loud and agitated whisper as he said the last words.

"There we certainly differ," said Lydgate. But he was not sorry that the door was now opened, and Mr. Vincy was announced. That florid sociable personage was become more interesting to him since he had seen Rosamond. Not that, like her, he had been weaving any future in which their lots were united; but a man naturally remembers a charming girl with pleasure, and is willing to dine where he may see her again. Before he took leave, Mr. Vincy had given that invitation which he had been "in no hurry about," for Rosamond at breakfast had mentioned that she thought her uncle Featherstone had taken the new doctor into great favour.

Mr. Bulstrode, alone with his brother-in-law, poured himself out a glass of water, and opened a sandwich-box.

"I cannot persuade you to adopt my regimen, Vincy?"

"No, no; I've no opinion of that system. Life wants padding," said Mr. Vincy, unable to omit his portable theory. "However," he went on, accenting the word, as if to dismiss all irrelevance, "what I came here to talk about was a little affair of my young scapegrace, Fred's."

"That is a subject on which you and I are likely to take quite as different views as on diet, Vincy."

"I hope not this time." (Mr. Vincy was resolved to be good-humoured.) "The fact is, it's about a whim of old Featherstone's. Somebody has been cooking up a story out of spite, and telling it to the old man, to try to set him against Fred. He's very fond of Fred, and is likely to do something handsome for him; indeed, he has as good as told Fred that he means to leave him his land, and that makes other people jealous."

"Vincy, I must repeat, that you will not get any concurrence from me as to the course you have pursued with your eldest son. It was entirely from worldly vanity that you destined him for the Church: with a family of three sons and four daughters, you were not warranted in devoting money to an expensive education which has succeeded in nothing but in giving him extravagant idle habits. You are now reaping the consequences."

To point out other people's errors was a duty that Mr. Bulstrode rarely shrank from, but Mr. Vincy was not equally prepared to be patient. When a man has the immediate prospect of being mayor, and is ready, in the interests of commerce, to take up a firm attitude on politics generally, he has naturally a sense of his importance to the framework of things which seems to throw questions of private conduct into the background. And this particular reproof irritated him more than any other. It was eminently superfluous to him to be told that he was reaping the consequences. But he felt his neck under Bulstrode's yoke; and though he usually enjoyed kicking, he was anxious to refrain from that relief.

"As to that, Bulstrode, it's no use going back. I'm not one of your pattern men, and I don't pretend to be. I couldn't foresee everything in the trade; there wasn't a finer business in Middlemarch than ours, and the lad was clever. My poor brother was in the Church, and would have done well—had got preferment already, but that stomach fever took him off: else he might have been a dean by this time. I think I was justified in what I tried to do for Fred. If you come to religion, it seems to me a man shouldn't want to carve out his meat to an ounce beforehand:—one must trust a little to Providence and be generous. It's a good British feeling to try and raise your family a little: in my opinion, it's a father's duty to give his sons a fine chance."

"I don't wish to act otherwise than as your best friend, Vincy, when I say that what you have been uttering just now is one mass of worldliness and inconsistent folly."

"Very well," said Mr. Vincy, kicking in spite of resolutions, "I never profess to be anything but worldly; and, what's more, I don't see anybody else who is not worldly. I suppose you don't conduct business on what you call unworldly principles. The only difference I see is that one worldliness is a little bit honester than another."

"This kind of discussion is unfruitful, Vincy," said Mr. Bulstrode, who, finishing his sandwich, had thrown himself back in his chair, and shaded his eyes as if weary. "You had some more particular business."

"Yes, yes. The long and short of it is, somebody has told old Featherstone, giving you as the authority, that Fred has been borrowing or trying to borrow money on the prospect of his land. Of course you never said any such nonsense. But the old fellow will insist on it that Fred should bring him a denial in your handwriting; that is, just a bit of a note saying you don't believe a word of such stuff, either of his having borrowed or tried to borrow in such a fool's way. I suppose you can have no objection to do that."

"Pardon me. I have an objection. I am by no means sure that your son, in his recklessness and ignorance—I will use no severer word—has not tried to raise money by holding out his future prospects, or even that some one may not have been foolish enough to supply him on so vague a presumption: there is plenty of such lax money-lending as of other folly in the world."

"But Fred gives me his honour that he has never borrowed money on the pretence of any understanding about his uncle's land. He is not a liar. I don't want to make him better than he is. I have blown him up well—nobody can say I wink at what he does. But he is not a liar. And I should have thought—but I may be wrong—that there was no religion to hinder a man from believing the best of a young fellow, when you don't know worse. It seems to me it would be a poor sort of religion to put a spoke in his wheel by refusing to say you don't believe such harm of him as you've got no good reason to believe."

"I am not at all sure that I should be befriending your son by smoothing his way to the future possession of Featherstone's property. I cannot regard wealth as a blessing to those who use it simply as a harvest for this world. You do not like to hear these things, Vincy, but on this occasion I feel called upon to tell you that I have no motive for furthering such a disposition of property as that which you refer to. I do not shrink from saying that it will not tend to your son's eternal welfare or to the glory of God. Why then should you expect me to pen this kind of affidavit, which has no object but to keep up a foolish partiality and secure a foolish bequest?"

"If you mean to hinder everybody from having money but saints and evangelists, you must give up some profitable partnerships, that's all I can say," Mr. Vincy burst out very bluntly. "It may be for the glory of God, but it is not for the glory of the Middlemarch trade, that Plymdale's house uses those blue and green dyes it gets from the Brassing manufactory; they rot the silk, that's all I know about it. Perhaps if other people knew so much of the profit went to the glory of God, they might like it better. But I don't mind so much about that—I could get up a pretty row, if I chose."

Mr. Bulstrode paused a little before he answered. "You pain me very much by speaking in this way, Vincy. I do not expect you to understand my grounds of action—it is not an easy thing even to thread a path for principles in the intricacies of the world—still less to make the thread clear for the careless and the scoffing. You must remember, if you please, that I stretch my tolerance towards you as my wife's brother, and that it little becomes you to complain of me as withholding material help towards the worldly position of your family. I must remind you that it is not your own prudence or judgment that has enabled you to keep your place in the trade."

"Very likely not; but you have been no loser by my trade yet," said Mr. Vincy, thoroughly nettled (a result which was seldom much retarded by previous resolutions). "And when you married Harriet, I don't see how you could expect that our families should not hang by the same nail. If you've changed your mind, and want my family to come down in the world, you'd better say so. I've never changed: I'm a plain Churchman now, just as I used to be before doctrines came up. I take the world as I find it, in trade and everything else. I'm contented to be no worse than my neighbours. But if you want us to come down in the world, say so. I shall know better what to do then."

"You talk unreasonably. Shall you come down in the world for want of this letter about your son?"

"Well, whether or not, I consider it very unhandsome of you to refuse it. Such doings may be lined with religion, but outside they have a nasty, dog-in-the-manger look. You might as well slander Fred: it comes pretty near to it when you refuse to say you didn't set a slander going. It's this sort of thing—this tyrannical spirit, wanting to play bishop and banker everywhere—it's this sort of thing makes a man's name stink."

"Vincy, if you insist on quarrelling with me, it will be exceedingly painful to Harriet as well as myself," said Mr. Bulstrode, with a trifle more eagerness and paleness than usual.

"I don't want to quarrel. It's for my interest—and perhaps for yours too—that we should be friends. I bear you no grudge; I think no worse of you than I do of other people. A man who half starves himself, and goes the length in family prayers, and so on, that you do, believes in his religion whatever it may be: you could turn over your capital just as fast with cursing and swearing:—plenty of fellows do. You like to be master, there's no denying that; you must be first chop in heaven, else you won't like it much. But you're my sister's husband, and we ought to stick together; and if I know Harriet, she'll consider it your fault if we quarrel because you strain at a gnat in this way, and refuse to do Fred a good turn. And I don't mean to say I shall bear it well. I consider it unhandsome."

Mr. Vincy rose, began to button his greatcoat, and looked steadily at his brother-in-law, meaning to imply a demand for a decisive answer.

This was not the first time that Mr. Bulstrode had begun by admonishing Mr. Vincy, and had ended by seeing a very unsatisfactory reflection of himself in the coarse unflattering mirror which that manufacturer's mind presented to the subtler lights and shadows of his fellow-men; and perhaps his experience ought to have warned him how the scene would end. But a full-fed fountain will be generous with its waters even in the rain, when they are worse than useless; and a fine fount of admonition is apt to be equally irrepressible.

It was not in Mr. Bulstrode's nature to comply directly in consequence of uncomfortable suggestions. Before changing his course, he always needed to shape his motives and bring them into accordance with his habitual standard. He said, at last—

"I will reflect a little, Vincy. I will mention the subject to Harriet. I shall probably send you a letter."

"Very well. As soon as you can, please. I hope it will all be settled before I see you to-morrow."

CHAPTER XIV

"Follows here the strict receipt
For that sauce to dainty meat,
Named Idleness, which many eat
By preference, and call it sweet:
  First watch for morsels, like a hound,
  Mix well with buffets, stir them round
  With good thick oil of flatteries,
  And froth with mean self-lauding lies.
  Serve warm: the vessels you must choose
  To keep it in are dead men's shoes."

Mr. Bulstrode's consultation of Harriet seemed to have had the effect desired by Mr. Vincy, for early the next morning a letter came which Fred could carry to Mr. Featherstone as the required testimony.

The old gentleman was staying in bed on account of the cold weather, and as Mary Garth was not to be seen in the sitting-room, Fred went up-stairs immediately and presented the letter to his uncle, who, propped up comfortably on a bed-rest, was not less able than usual to enjoy his consciousness of wisdom in distrusting and frustrating mankind. He put on his spectacles to read the letter, pursing up his lips and drawing down their corners.

"'*Under the circumstances I will not decline to state my conviction*'—tchah! what fine words the fellow puts! He's as fine as an auctioneer—'*that your son Frederic has not obtained any advance of money on bequests promised by Mr. Featherstone*'—promised? who said I had ever promised? I promise nothing—I shall make codicils as long as I like—'*and that considering the nature of such a proceeding, it is unreasonable to presume that a young man of sense and character would attempt it*'—ah, but the gentleman doesn't say you *are* a young man of sense and character, mark you that, sir!—'*as to my own concern with any report of such a nature, I distinctly affirm that I never made any statement to the effect that your son had borrowed money on any property that might accrue to him on Mr. Featherstone's demise*'—bless my heart! 'property—accrue—demise!' Lawyer Standish is nothing to him. He couldn't speak finer if he wanted to borrow. Well," Mr. Featherstone here looked over his spectacles at Fred, while he handed back the letter to him with a contemptuous gesture, "you don't suppose I believe a thing because Bulstrode writes it out fine, eh?"

Fred coloured. "You wished to have the letter, sir. I should think it very likely that Mr. Bulstrode's denial is as good as the authority which told you what he denies."

"Every bit. I never said I believed either one or the other. And now what d'you expect?" said Mr. Featherstone, curtly, keeping on his spectacles, but withdrawing his hands under his wraps.

"I expect nothing, sir." Fred with difficulty restrained himself from venting his irritation. "I came to bring you the letter. If you like, I will bid you good morning."

"Not yet, not yet. Ring the bell; I want missy to come."

It was a servant who came in answer to the bell.

"Tell missy to come!" said Mr. Featherstone, impatiently.

"What business had she to go away?" He spoke in the same tone when Mary came.

"Why couldn't you sit still here till I told you to go? I want my waistcoat now. I told you always to put it on the bed."

Mary's eyes looked rather red, as if she had been crying. It was clear that Mr. Featherstone was in one of his most snappish humours this morning, and though Fred had now the prospect of receiving the much-needed present of money, he would have preferred being free to turn round on the old tyrant and tell him that Mary Garth was too good to be at his beck. Though Fred had risen as she entered the room, she had barely noticed him, and looked as if her nerves were quivering with the expectation that something would be thrown at her. But she never had anything worse than words to dread. When she went to reach the waistcoat from a peg, Fred went up to her and said, "Allow me."

"Let it alone! You bring it, missy, and lay it down here," said Mr. Featherstone. "Now you go away again till I call you," he added, when the waistcoat was laid down by him. It was usual with him to season his pleasure in showing favour to one person by being especially disagreeable to another, and Mary was always at hand to furnish the condiment. When his own relatives came she was treated better. Slowly he took out a bunch of keys from the waistcoat-pocket, and slowly he drew forth a tin box which was under the bed-clothes.

"You expect I'm going to give you a little fortune, eh?" he said, looking above his spectacles and pausing in the act of opening the lid.

"Not at all, sir. You were good enough to speak of making me a present the other day, else, of course, I should not have thought of the matter." But Fred was of a hopeful disposition, and a vision had presented itself of a sum just large enough to deliver him from a certain anxiety. When Fred got into debt, it always seemed to him highly probable that something or other—he did not necessarily conceive what—would come to pass enabling him to pay in due time. And now that the providential occurrence was apparently close at hand, it would have been sheer absurdity to think that the supply would be short of the need: as absurd as a faith that believed in half a miracle for want of strength to believe in a whole one.

The deep-veined hands fingered many bank-notes one after the other, laying them down flat again, while Fred leaned back in his chair, scorning to look eager. He held himself to be a gentleman at heart, and did not like courting an old fellow for his money. At last, Mr. Featherstone eyed him again over his spectacles and presented him with a little sheaf of notes; Fred could see distinctly that there were but five, as the less significant edges gaped towards him. But then, each might mean fifty pounds. He took them, saying—

"I am very much obliged to you, sir," and was going to roll them up without seeming to think of their value. But this did not suit Mr. Featherstone, who was eyeing him intently.

"Come, don't you think it worth your while to count 'em? You take money like a lord; I suppose you lose it like one."

"I thought I was not to look a gift-horse in the mouth, sir. But I shall be very happy to count them."

Fred was not so happy, however, after he had counted them. For they actually presented the absurdity of being less than his hopefulness had decided that they must be. What can the fitness of things mean, if not their fitness to a man's expectations? Failing this, absurdity and atheism gape behind him. The collapse for Fred was severe when he found that he held no more than five twenties, and his share in the higher education of this country did not seem to help him. Nevertheless he said, with rapid changes in his fair complexion—

"It is very handsome of you, sir."

"I should think it is," said Mr. Featherstone, locking his box and replacing it, then taking off his spectacles deliberately, and at length, as if his inward meditation had more deeply convinced him, repeating, "I should think it *is* handsome."

"I assure you, sir, I am very grateful," said Fred, who had had time to recover his cheerful air.

"So you ought to be. You want to cut a figure in the world, and I reckon Peter Featherstone is the only one you've got to trust to." Here the old man's eyes gleamed with a curiously-mingled satisfaction in the consciousness that this smart young fellow relied upon him, and that the smart young fellow was rather a fool for doing so.

"Yes, indeed: I was not born to very splendid chances. Few men have been more cramped than I have been," said Fred, with some sense of surprise at his own virtue, considering how hardly he was dealt with. "It really seems a little too bad to have to ride a broken-winded hunter, and see men, who are not half such good judges as yourself, able to throw away any amount of money on buying bad bargains."

"Well, you can buy yourself a fine hunter now. Eighty pound is enough for that, I reckon—and you'll have twenty pound over to get yourself out of any little scrape," said Mr. Featherstone, chuckling slightly.

"You are very good, sir," said Fred, with a fine sense of contrast between the words and his feeling.

"Ay, rather a better uncle than your fine uncle Bulstrode. You won't get much out of his spekilations, I think. He's got a pretty strong string round your father's leg, by what I hear, eh?"

"My father never tells me anything about his affairs, sir."

"Well, he shows some sense there. But other people find 'em out without his telling. *He'll* never have much to leave you: he'll most-like die without a will—he's the sort of man to do it—let 'em make him mayor of Middlemarch as much as they like. But you won't get much by his dying without a will, though you *are* the eldest son."

Fred thought that Mr. Featherstone had never been so disagreeable before. True, he had never before given him quite so much money at once.

"Shall I destroy this letter of Mr. Bulstrode's, sir?" said Fred, rising with the letter as if he would put it in the fire.

"Ay, ay, I don't want it. It's worth no money to me."

Fred carried the letter to the fire, and thrust the poker through it with much zest. He longed to get out of the room, but he was a little ashamed before his inner self, as well as before his uncle, to run away immediately after pocketing the money. Presently, the farm-bailiff came up to give his master a report, and Fred, to his unspeakable relief, was dismissed with the injunction to come again soon.

He had longed not only to be set free from his uncle, but also to find Mary Garth. She was now in her usual place by the fire, with sewing in her hands and a book open on the little table by her side. Her eyelids had lost some of their redness now, and she had her usual air of self-command.

"Am I wanted up-stairs?" she said, half rising as Fred entered.

"No; I am only dismissed, because Simmons is gone up."

Mary sat down again, and resumed her work. She was certainly treating him with more indifference than usual: she did not know how affectionately indignant he had felt on her behalf up-stairs.

"May I stay here a little, Mary, or shall I bore you?"

"Pray sit down," said Mary; "you will not be so heavy a bore as Mr. John Waule, who was here yesterday, and he sat down without asking my leave."

"Poor fellow! I think he is in love with you."

"I am not aware of it. And to me it is one of the most odious things in a girl's life, that there must always be some supposition of falling in love coming between her and any man who is kind to her, and to whom she is grateful. I should have thought that I, at least, might have been safe from all that. I have no ground for the nonsensical vanity of fancying everybody who comes near me is in love with me."

Mary did not mean to betray a feeling, but in spite of herself she ended in a tremulous tone of vexation.

"Confound John Waule! I did not mean to make you angry. I didn't know you had any reason for being grateful to him. I forgot what a great service you think it if any one snuffs a candle for you." Fred also had his pride, and was not going to show that he knew what had called forth this outburst of Mary's.

"Oh, I am not angry, except with the ways of the world. I do like to be spoken to as if I had common-sense. I really often feel as if I could understand a little more than I ever hear even from young gentlemen who have been to college." Mary had recovered, and she spoke with a suppressed rippling under-current of laughter pleasant to hear.

"I don't care how merry you are at my expense this morning," said Fred, "I thought you looked so sad when you came upstairs. It is a shame you should stay here to be bullied in that way."

"Oh, I have an easy life—by comparison. I have tried being a teacher, and I am not fit for that: my mind is too fond of wandering on its own way. I think any hardship is better than pretending to do what one is paid for, and never really doing it. Everything here I can do as well as any one else could; perhaps better than some—Rosy, for example. Though she is just the sort of beautiful creature that is imprisoned with ogres in fairy tales."

"*Rosy!*" cried Fred, in a tone of profound brotherly scepticism.

"Come, Fred!" said Mary, emphatically; "*you* have no right to be so critical."

"Do you mean anything particular—just now?"

"No, I mean something general—always."

"Oh, that I am idle and extravagant. Well, I am not fit to be a poor man. I should not have made a bad fellow if I had been rich."

"You would have done your duty in that state of life to which it has not pleased God to call you," said Mary, laughing.

"Well, I couldn't do my duty as a clergyman, any more than you could do yours as a governess. You ought to have a little fellow-feeling there, Mary."

"I never said you ought to be a clergyman. There are other sorts of work. It seems to me very miserable not to resolve on some course and act accordingly."

"So I could, if——" Fred broke off, and stood up, leaning against the mantelpiece.

"If you were sure you should not have a fortune?"

"I did not say that. You want to quarrel with me. It is too bad of you to be guided by what other people say about me."

"How can I want to quarrel with you! I should be quarrelling with all my new books," said Mary, lifting the volume on the table. "However naughty you may be to other people, you are good to me."

"Because I like you better than any one else. But I know you despise me."

"Yes, I do—a little," said Mary, nodding, with a smile.

"You would admire a stupendous fellow, who would have wise opinions about everything."

"Yes, I should." Mary was sewing swiftly, and seemed provokingly mistress of the situation. When a conversation has taken a wrong turn for us, we only get farther and farther into the swamp of awkwardness. This was what Fred Vincy felt.

"I suppose a woman is never in love with any one she has always known—ever since she can remember; as a man often is. It is always some new fellow who strikes a girl."

"Let me see," said Mary, the corners of her mouth curling archly; "I must go back on my experience. There is Juliet—she seems an example of what you say. But then Ophelia had probably known Hamlet a long while; and Brenda Troil—she had known Mordaunt Merton ever since they were children; but then he seems to have been an estimable young man; and Minna was still more deeply in love with Cleveland, who was a stranger. Waverley was new to Flora MacIvor; but then she did not fall in love with him. And there are Olivia and Sophia Primrose, and Corinne—they may be said to have fallen in love with new men. Altogether, my experience is rather mixed."

Mary looked up with some roguishness at Fred, and that look of hers was very dear to him, though the eyes were nothing more than clear windows where observation sate laughingly. He was certainly an affectionate fellow, and as he had grown from boy to man, he had grown in love with his old playmate, notwithstanding that share in the higher education of the country which had exalted his views of rank and income.

"When a man is not loved, it is no use for him to say that he could be a better fellow—could do anything—I mean, if he were sure of being loved in return."

"Not of the least use in the world for him to say he *could* be better. Might, could, would—they are contemptible auxiliaries."

"I don't see how a man is to be good for much unless he has some one woman to love him dearly."

"I think the goodness should come before he expects that."

"You know better, Mary. Women don't love men for their goodness."

"Perhaps not. But if they love them, they never think them bad."

"It is hardly fair to say I am bad."

"I said nothing at all about you."

"I never shall be good for anything, Mary, if you will not say that you love me—if you will not promise to marry me—I mean, when I am able to marry."

"If I did love you, I would not marry you: I would certainly not promise ever to marry you."

"I think that is quite wicked, Mary. If you love me, you ought to promise to marry me."

"On the contrary, I think it would be wicked in me to marry you even if I did love you."

"You mean, just as I am, without any means of maintaining a wife. Of course: I am but three-and-twenty."

"In that last point you will alter. But I am not so sure of any other alteration. My father says an idle man ought not to exist, much less be married."

"Then I am to blow my brains out?"

"No; on the whole I should think you would do better to pass your examination. I have heard Mr. Farebrother say it is disgracefully easy."

"That is all very fine. Anything is easy to him. Not that cleverness has anything to do with it. I am ten times cleverer than many men who pass."

"Dear me!" said Mary, unable to repress her sarcasm. "That accounts for the curates like Mr. Crowse. Divide your cleverness by ten, and the quotient—dear me!—is able to take a degree. But that only shows you are ten times more idle than the others."

"Well, if I did pass, you would not want me to go into the Church?"

"That is not the question—what I want you to do. You have a conscience of your own, I suppose. There! there is Mr. Lydgate. I must go and tell my uncle."

"Mary," said Fred, seizing her hand as she rose; "if you will not give me some encouragement, I shall get worse instead of better."

"I will not give you any encouragement," said Mary, reddening. "Your friends would dislike it, and so would mine. My father would think it a disgrace to me if I accepted a man who got into debt, and would not work!"

Fred was stung, and released her hand. She walked to the door, but there she turned and said: "Fred, you have always been so good, so generous to me. I am not ungrateful. But never speak to me in that way again."

"Very well," said Fred, sulkily, taking up his hat and whip. His complexion showed patches of pale pink and dead white. Like many a plucked idle young gentleman, he was thoroughly in love, and with a plain girl, who had no money! But having Mr. Featherstone's land in the background, and a persuasion that, let Mary say what she would, she really did care for him, Fred was not utterly in despair.

When he got home, he gave four of the twenties to his mother, asking her to keep them for him. "I don't want to spend that money, mother. I want it to pay a debt with. So keep it safe away from my fingers."

"Bless you, my dear," said Mrs. Vincy. She doated on her eldest son and her youngest girl (a child of six), whom others thought her two naughtiest children. The mother's eyes are not always deceived in their partiality: she at least can best judge who is the tender, filial-hearted child. And Fred was certainly very fond of his mother. Perhaps it was his fondness for another person also that made him particularly anxious to take some security against his own liability to spend the hundred pounds. For the creditor to whom he owed a hundred and sixty held a firmer security in the shape of a bill signed by Mary's father.

CHAPTER XV

"Black eyes you have left, you say,
  Blue eyes fail to draw you;
Yet you seem more rapt to-day,
  Than of old we saw you.

Oh I track the fairest fair
  Through new haunts of pleasure;
Footprints here and echoes there
  Guide me to my treasure:

Lo! she turns—immortal youth
  Wrought to mortal stature,
Fresh as starlight's aged truth—
  Many-namèd Nature!"

A GREAT historian, as he insisted on calling himself, who had the happiness to be dead a hundred and twenty years ago, and so to take his place among the colossi whose huge legs our living pettiness is observed to walk under, glories in his copious remarks and digressions as the least imitable part of his work, and especially in those initial chapters to the successive books of his history, where he seems to bring his arm-chair to the proscenium and chat with us in all the lusty ease of his fine English. But Fielding lived when the days were longer (for time, like money, is measured by our needs), when summer afternoons were spacious, and the clock ticked slowly in the winter evenings. We belated historians must not linger after his example; and if we did so, it is probable that our chat would be thin and eager, as if delivered from a camp-stool in a parrot-house. I at least have so much to do in unravelling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe.

At present I have to make the new settler Lydgate better known to any one interested in him than he could possibly be even to those who had seen the most of him since his arrival in Middlemarch. For surely all must admit that a man may be puffed and belauded, envied, ridiculed, counted upon as a tool and fallen in love with, or at least selected as a future husband, and yet remain virtually unknown—known merely as a cluster of signs for his neighbours' false suppositions.

There was a general impression, however, that Lydgate was not altogether a common country doctor, and in Middlemarch at that time such an impression was significant of great things being expected from him. For everybody's family doctor was remarkably clever, and was understood to have immeasurable skill in the management and training of the most skittish or vicious diseases. The evidence of his cleverness was of the higher intuitive order, lying in his lady patients' immovable conviction, and was unassailable by any objection except that their intuitions were opposed by others equally strong; each lady who saw medical truth in Wrench and "the strengthening treatment" regarding Toller and "the lowering system" as medical perdition. For the heroic times of copious bleeding and blistering had not yet departed, still less the times of thorough-going theory, when disease in general was called by some bad name, and treated accordingly without shilly-shally—as if, for example, it were to be called insurrection, which must not be fired on with blank-cartridge, but have its blood drawn at once. The strengtheners and the lowerers were all "clever" men in somebody's opinion, which is really as much as can be said for any living talents. Nobody's imagination had gone so far as to conjecture that Mr. Lydgate could know as much as Dr. Sprague and Dr. Minchin, the two physicians, who alone could offer any hope when danger was extreme, and when the smallest hope was worth a guinea. Still, I repeat, there was a general impression that Lydgate was something rather more uncommon than any general practitioner in Middlemarch. And this was true. He was but seven-and-twenty, an age at which many men are not quite common—at which they are hopeful of achievement, resolute in avoidance, thinking that Mammon shall never put a bit in their mouths and get astride their backs, but rather that Mammon, if they have anything to do with him, shall draw their chariot.

He had been left an orphan when he was fresh from a public school. His father, a military man, had made but little provision for three children, and when the boy Tertius asked to have a medical education, it seemed easier to his guardians to grant his request by apprenticing him to a country practitioner than to make any objections on the score of family dignity. He was one of the rarer lads who early get a decided bent and make up their minds that there is something particular in life which they would like to do for its own sake, and not because their fathers did it. Most of us who turn to any subject we love remember some morning or evening hour when we got on a high stool to reach down an untried volume, or sat with parted lips listening to a new talker, or for very lack of books began to listen to the voices within, as the first traceable beginning of our love. Something of that sort happened to Lydgate. He was a quick fellow, and when hot from play, would toss himself in a corner, and in five minutes be deep in any sort of book that he could lay his hands on: if it were Rasselas or Gulliver, so much the better, but Bailey's Dictionary would do, or the Bible with the Apocrypha in it. Something he must read, when he was not riding the pony, or running and hunting, or listening to the talk of men. All this was true of him at ten years of age; he had then read through 'Chrysal, or the Adventures of a Guinea,' which was neither milk for babes, nor any chalky mixture meant to pass for milk, and it had already occurred to him that books were stuff, and that life was stupid. His school studies had not much modified that opinion, for though he "did" his classics and mathematics, he was not pre-eminent in them. It was said of him, that Lydgate could do anything he liked, but he had certainly not yet liked to do anything remarkable. He was a vigorous animal with a ready understanding, but no spark had yet kindled in him an intellectual passion; knowledge seemed to him a very superficial affair, easily mastered: judging from the conversation of his elders, he had apparenty got already more than was necessary for mature life. Probably this was not an exceptional result of expensive teaching at that period of short-waisted coats, and other fashions which have not yet recurred. But, one vacation, a wet day sent him to the small home library to hunt once more for a book which might have some freshness for him: in vain! unless, indeed, he took down a dusty row of volumes with grey-paper backs and dingy labels—the volumes of an old Cyclopædia which he had never disturbed. It would at least be a novelty to disturb them. They were on the highest shelf, and he stood on a chair to get them down. But he opened the volume which he first took from the shelf: somehow, one is apt to read in a makeshift attitude, just where it might seem inconvenient to do so. The page he opened on was under the heading of Anatomy, and the first passage that drew his eyes was on the valves of the heart. He was not much acquainted with valves of any sort, but he knew that *valvæ* were folding doors, and through this crevice came a sudden light startling him with his first vivid notion of finely-adjusted mechanism in the human frame. A liberal education had of course left him free to read the indecent passages in the school classics, but beyond a general sense of secrecy and obscenity in connection with his internal structure, had left his imagination quite unbiassed, so that for anything he knew his brains lay in small bags at his temples, and he had no more thought of representing to himself how his blood circulated than how paper served instead of gold. But the moment of vocation had come, and before he got down from his chair, the world was made new to him by a presentiment of endless processes filling the vast spaces planked out of his sight by that wordy ignorance which he had supposed to be knowledge. From that hour Lydgate felt the growth of an intellectual passion.

We are not afraid of telling over and over again how a man comes to fall in love with a woman and be wedded to her, or else be fatally parted from her. Is it due to excess of poetry or of stupidity that we are never weary of describing what King James called a woman's "makdom and her fairnesse," never weary of listening to the twanging of the old Troubadour strings, and are comparatively uninterested in that other kind of "makdom and fairnesse" which must be wooed with industrious thought and patient renunciation of small desires? In the story of this passion, too, the development varies: sometimes it is the glorious marriage, sometimes frustration and final parting. And not seldom the catastrophe is bound up with the other passion, sung by the Troubadours. For in the multitude of middle-aged men who go about their vocations in a daily course determined for them much in the same way as the tie of their cravats, there is always a good number who once meant to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little. The story of their coming to be shapen after the average and fit to be packed by the gross, is hardly ever told even in their consciousness; for perhaps their ardour in generous unpaid toil cooled as imperceptibly as the ardour of other youthful loves, till one day their earlier self walked like a ghost in its old home and made the new furniture ghastly. Nothing in the world more subtle than the process of their gradual change! In the beginning they inhaled it unknowingly: you and I may have sent some of our breath towards infecting them, when we uttered our conforming falsities or drew our silly conclusions: or perhaps it came with the vibrations from a woman's glance.

Lydgate did not mean to be one of those failures, and there was the better hope of him because his scientific interest soon took the form of a professional enthusiasm: he had a youthful belief in his bread-winning work, not to be stifled by that initiation in makeshift called his 'prentice days; and he carried to his studies in London, Edinburgh, and Paris, the conviction that the medical profession as it might be was the finest in the world; presenting the most perfect interchange between science and art; offering the most direct alliance between intellectual conquest and the social good. Lydgate's nature demanded this combination: he was an emotional creature, with a flesh-and-blood sense of fellowship which withstood all the abstractions of special study. He cared not only for "cases," but for John and Elizabeth, especially Elizabeth.

There was another attraction in this profession: it wanted reform, and gave a man an opportunity for some indignant resolve to reject its venal decorations and other humbug, and to be the possessor of genuine though undemanded qualifications. He went to study in Paris with the determination that when he came home again he would settle in some provincial town as a general practitioner, and resist the irrational severance between medical and surgical knowledge in the interest of his own scientific pursuits, as well as of the general advance: he would keep away from the range of London intrigues, jealousies, and social truckling, and win celebrity, however slowly, as Jenner had done, by the independent value of his work. For it must be remembered that this was a dark period; and in spite of venerable colleges which used great efforts to secure purity of knowledge by making it scarce, and to exclude error by a rigid exclusiveness in relation to fees and appointments, it happened that very ignorant young gentlemen were promoted in town, and many more got a legal right to practise over large areas in the country. Also, the high standard held up to the public mind by the College of Physicians, which gave its peculiar sanction to the expensive and highly-rarified medical instruction obtained by graduates of Oxford and Cambridge, did not hinder quackery from having an excellent time of it; for since professional practice chiefly consisted in giving a great many drugs, the public inferred that it might be better off with more drugs still, if they could only be got cheaply, and hence swallowed large cubic measures of physic prescribed by unscrupulous ignorance which had taken no degrees. Considering that statistics had not yet embraced a calculation as to the number of ignorant or canting doctors which absolutely must exist in the teeth of all changes, it seemed to Lydgate that a change in the units was the most direct mode of changing the numbers. He meant to be a unit who would make a certain amount of difference towards that spreading change which would one day tell appreciably upon the averages, and in the meantime have the pleasure of making an advantageous difference to the viscera of his own patients. But he did not simply aim at a more genuine kind of practice than was common. He was ambitious of a wider effect: he was fired with the possibility that he might work out the proof of an anatomical conception and make a link in the chain of discovery.

Does it seem incongruous to you that a Middlemarch surgeon should dream of himself as a discoverer? Most of us, indeed, know little of the great originators until they have been lifted up among the constellations and already rule our fates. But that Herschel, for example, who "broke the barriers of the heavens"—did he not once play a provincial church-organ, and give music-lessons to stumbling pianists? Each of those Shining Ones had to walk on the earth among neighbours who perhaps thought much more of his gait and his garments than of anything which was to give him a title to everlasting fame: each of them had his little local personal history sprinkled with small temptations and sordid cares, which made the retarding friction of his course towards final companionship with the immortals. Lydgate was not blind to the dangers of such friction, but he had plenty of confidence in his resolution to avoid it as far as possible: being seven-and-twenty, he felt himself experienced. And he was not going to have his vanities provoked by contact with the showy worldly successes of the capital, but to live among people who could hold no rivalry with that pursuit of a great idea which was to be a twin object with the assiduous practice of his profession. There was fascination in the hope that the two purposes would illuminate each other: the careful observation and inference which was his daily work, the use of the lens to further his judgment in special cases, would further his thought as an instrument of larger inquiry. Was not this the typical pre-eminence of his profession? He would be a good Middlemarch doctor, and by that very means keep himself in the track of far-reaching investigation. On one point he may fairly claim approval at this particular stage of his career; he did not mean to imitate those philanthropic models who make a profit out of poisonous pickles to support themselves while they are exposing adulteration, or hold shares in a gambling-hell that they may have leisure to represent the cause of public morality. He intended to begin in his own case some particular reforms which were quite certainly within his reach, and much less of a problem than the demonstrating of an anatomical conception. One of these reforms was to act stoutly on the strength of a recent legal decision, and simply prescribe, without dispensing drugs or taking percentage from druggists. This was an innovation for one who had chosen to adopt the style of general practitioner in a country town, and would be felt as offensive criticism by his professional brethren. But Lydgate meant to innovate in his treatment also, and he was wise enough to see that the best security for his practising honestly according to his belief was to get rid of systematic temptations to the contrary.

Perhaps that was a more cheerful time for observers and theorisers than the present; we are apt to think it the finest era of the world when America was beginning to be discovered, when a bold sailor, even if he were wrecked, might alight on a new kingdom; and about 1829 the dark territories of Pathology were a fine America for a spirited young adventurer. Lydgate was ambitious above all to contribute towards enlarging the scientific, rational basis of his profession. The more he became interested in special questions of disease, such as the nature of fever or fevers, the more keenly he felt the need for that fundamental knowledge of structure which just at the beginning of the century had been illuminated by the brief and glorious career of Bichat, who died when he was only one-and-thirty, but, like another Alexander, left a realm large enough for many heirs. That great Frenchman first carried out the conception that living bodies, fundamentally considered, are not associations of organs which can be understood by studying them first apart, and then as it were federally; but must be regarded as consisting of certain primary webs or tissues, out of which the various organs—brain, heart, lungs, and so on—are compacted, as the various accommodations of a house are built up in various proportions of wood, iron, stone, brick, zinc, and the rest, each material having its peculiar composition and proportions. No man, one sees, can understand and estimate the entire structure or its parts—what are its frailties and what its repairs, without knowing the nature of the materials. And the conception wrought out by Bichat, with his detailed study of the different tissues, acted necessarily on medical questions as the turning of gas-light would act on a dim, oil-lit street, showing new connections and hitherto hidden facts of structure which must be taken into account in considering the symptoms of maladies and the action of medicaments. But results which depend on human conscience and intelligence work slowly, and now at the end of 1829, most medical practice was still strutting or shambling along the old paths, and there was still scientific work to be done which might have seemed to be a direct sequence of Bichat's. This great seer did not go beyond the consideration of the tissues as ultimate facts in the living organism, marking the limit of anatomical analysis; but it was open to another mind to say, have not these structures some common basis from which they have all started, as your sarsnet, gauze, net, satin and velvet from the raw cocoon? Here would be another light, as of oxy-hydrogen, showing the very grain of things, and revising all former explanations. Of this sequence to Bichat's work, already vibrating along many currents of the European mind, Lydgate was enamoured; he longed to demonstrate the more intimate relations of living structure and help to define men's thought more accurately after the true order. The work had not yet been done, but only prepared for those who knew how to use the preparation. What was the primitive tissue? In that way Lydgate put the question—not quite in the way required by the awaiting answer; but such missing of the right word befalls many seekers. And he counted on quiet intervals to be watchfully seized, for taking up the threads of investigation—on many hints to be won from diligent application, not only of the scalpel, but of the microscope, which research had begun to use again with new enthusiasm of reliance. Such was Lydgate's plan of his future: to do good small work for Middlemarch, and great work for the world.

He was certainly a happy fellow at this time: to be seven-and-twenty, without any fixed vices, with a generous resolution that his action should be beneficent, and with ideas in his brain that made life interesting quite apart from the *cultus* of horse-flesh and other mystic rites of costly observance, which the eight hundred pounds left him after buying his practice would certainly not have gone far in paying for. He was at a starting-point which makes many a man's career a fine subject for betting, if there were any gentlemen given to that amusement who could appreciate the complicated probabilities of an arduous purpose, with all the possible thwartings and furtherings of circumstance, all the niceties of inward balance, by which a man swims and makes his point or else is carried headlong. The risk would remain, even with close knowledge of Lydgate's character; for character too is a process and an unfolding. The man was still in the making, as much as the Middlemarch doctor and immortal discoverer, and there were both virtues and faults capable of shrinking or expanding. The faults will not, I hope, be a reason for the withdrawal of your interest in him. Among our valued friends is there not some one or other who is a little too self-confident and disdainful; whose distinguished mind is a little spotted with commonness; who is a little pinched here and protuberant there with native prejudices; or whose better energies are liable to lapse down the wrong channel under the influence of transient solicitations? All these things might be alleged against Lydgate, but then, they are the periphrases of a polite preacher, who talks of Adam, and would not like to mention anything painful to the pew-renters. The particular faults from which these delicate generalities are distilled have distinguishable physiognomies, diction, and grimaces; filling up parts in very various dramas. Our vanities differ as our noses do: all conceit is not the same conceit, but varies in correspondence with the minutiæ of mental make in which one of us differs from another. Lydgate's conceit was of the arrogant sort, never simpering, never impertinent, but massive in its claims and benevolently contemptuous. He would do a great deal for noodles, being sorry for them, and feeling quite sure that they could have no power over him: he had thought of joining the Saint Simonians when he was in Paris, in order to turn them against some of their own doctrines. All his faults were marked by kindred traits, and were those of a man who had a fine baritone, whose clothes hung well upon him, and who even in his ordinary gestures had an air of inbred distinction. Where then lay the spots of commonness? says a young lady enamoured of that careless grace. How could there be any commonness in a man so well-bred, so ambitious of social distinction, so generous and unusual in his views of social duty? As easily as there may be stupidity in a man of genius if you take him unawares on the wrong subject, or as many a man who has the best will to advance the social millennium might be ill-inspired in imagining its lighter pleasures; unable to go beyond Offenbach's music, or the brilliant punning in the last burlesque. Lydgate's spots of commonness lay in the complexion of his prejudices, which, in spite of noble intentions and sympathy, were half of them such as are found in ordinary men of the world: that distinction of mind which belonged to his intellectual ardour, did not penetrate his feeling and judgment about furniture, or women, or the desirability of its being known (without his telling) that he was better born than other country surgeons. He did not mean to think of furniture at present; but whenever he did so, it was to be feared that neither biology nor schemes of reform would lift him above the vulgarity of feeling that there would be an incompatibility in his furniture not being of the best.

As to women, he had once already been drawn headlong by impetuous folly, which he meant to be final, since marriage at some distant period would of course not be impetuous. For those who want to be acquainted with Lydgate it will be good to know what was that case of impetuous folly, for it may stand as an example of the fitful swerving of passion to which he was prone, together with the chivalrous kindness which helped to make him morally lovable. The story can be told without many words. It happened when he was studying in Paris, and just at the time when, over and above his other work, he was occupied with some galvanic experiments. One evening, tired with his experimenting, and not being able to elicit the facts he needed, he left his frogs and rabbits to some repose under their trying and mysterious dispensation of unexplained shocks, and went to finish his evening at the theatre of the Porte Saint Martin, where there was a melodrama which he had already seen several times; attracted, not by the ingenious work of the collaborating authors, but by an actress whose part it was to stab her lover, mistaking him for the evil-designing duke of the piece. Lydgate was in love with this actress, as a man is in love with a woman whom he never expects to speak to. She was a Provençale, with dark eyes, a Greek profile, and rounded majestic form, having that sort of beauty which carries a sweet matronliness even in youth, and her voice was a soft cooing. She had but lately come to Paris, and bore a virtuous reputation, her husband acting with her as the unfortunate lover. It was her acting which was "no better than it should be," but the public was satisfied. Lydgate's only relaxation now was to go and look at this woman, just as he might have thrown himself under the breath of the sweet south on a bank of violets for a while, without prejudice to his galvanism, to which he would presently return. But this evening the old drama had a new catastrophe. At the moment when the heroine was to act the stabbing of her lover, and he was to fall gracefully, the wife veritably stabbed her husband, who fell as death willed. A wild shriek pierced the house, and the Provençale fell swooning: a shriek and a swoon were demanded by the play, but the swooning too was real this time. Lydgate leaped and climbed, he hardly knew how, on to the stage, and was active in help, making the acquaintance of his heroine by finding a contusion on her head and lifting her gently in his arms. Paris rang with the story of this death:—was it a murder? Some of the actress's warmest admirers were inclined to believe in her guilt, and liked her the better for it (such was the taste of those times); but Lydgate was not one of these. He vehemently contended for her innocence, and the remote impersonal passion for her beauty which he had felt before, had passed now into personal devotion, and tender thought of her lot. The notion of murder was absurd; no motive was discoverable, the young couple being understood to dote on each other; and it was not unprecedented that an accidental slip of the foot should have brought these grave consequences. The legal investigation ended in Madame Laure's release. Lydgate by this time had had many interviews with her, and found her more and more adorable. She talked little; but that was an additional charm. She was melancholy, and seemed grateful; her presence was enough, like that of the evening light. Lydgate was madly anxious about her affection, and jealous lest any other man than himself should win it and ask her to marry him. But instead of re-opening her engagement at the Porte Saint Martin, where she would have been all the more popular for the fatal episode, she left Paris without warning, forsaking her little court of admirers. Perhaps no one carried inquiry far except Lydgate, who felt that all science had come to a stand-still while he imagined the unhappy Laure, stricken by ever-wandering sorrow, herself wandering, and finding no faithful comforter. Hidden actresses, however, are not so difficult to find as some other hidden facts, and it was not long before Lydgate gathered indications that Laure had taken the route to Lyons. He found her at last acting with great success at Avignon under the same name, looking more majestic than ever as a forsaken wife carrying her child in her arms. He spoke to her after the play, was received with the usual quietude which seemed to him beautiful as clear depths of water, and obtained leave to visit her the next day; when he was bent on telling her that he adored her, and on asking her to marry him. He knew that this was like the sudden impulse of a madman—incongruous even with his habitual foibles. No matter! It was the one thing which he was resolved to do. He had two selves within him apparently, and they must learn to accommodate each other and bear reciprocal impediments. Strange, that some of us, with quick alternate vision, see beyond our infatuations, and even while we rave on the heights, behold the wide plain where our persistent self pauses and awaits us.

To have approached Laure with any suit that was not reverentially tender would have been simply a contradiction of his whole feeling towards her.

"You have come all the way from Paris to find me?" she said to him the next day, sitting before him with folded arms, and looking at him with eyes that seemed to wonder as an untamed ruminating animal wonders. "Are all Englishmen like that?"

"I came because I could not live without trying to see you. You are lonely; I love you; I want you to consent to be my wife: I will wait, but I want you to promise that you will marry me—no one else."

Laure looked at him in silence with a melancholy radiance from under her grand eyelids, until he was full of rapturous certainty, and knelt close to her knees.

"I will tell you something," she said, in her cooing way, keeping her arms folded. "My foot really slipped."

"I know, I know," said Lydgate, deprecatingly. "It was a fatal accident—a dreadful stroke of calamity that bound me to you the more."

Again Laure paused a little and then said, slowly, "*I meant to do it.*"

Lydgate, strong man as he was, turned pale and trembled: moments seemed to pass before he rose and stood at a distance from her.

"There was a secret, then," he said at last, even vehemently. "He was brutal to you: you hated him."

"No! he wearied me; he was too fond: he would live in Paris, and not in my country; that was not agreeable to me."

"Great God!" said Lydgate, in a groan of horror. "And you planned to murder him?"

"I did not plan: it came to me in the play—*I meant to do it.*"

Lydgate stood mute, and unconsciously pressed his hat on while he looked at her. He saw this woman—the first to whom he had given his young adoration—amid the throng of stupid criminals.

"You are a good young man," she said. "But I do not like husbands. I will never have another."

Three days afterwards Lydgate was at his galvanism again in his Paris chambers, believing that illusions were at an end for him. He was saved from hardening effects by the abundant kindness of his heart and his belief that human life might be made better. But he had more reason than ever for trusting his judgment, now that it was so experienced; and henceforth he would take a strictly scientific view of woman, entertaining no expectations, but such as were justified beforehand.

No one in Middlemarch was likely to have such a notion of Lydgate's past as has here been faintly shadowed, and indeed the respectable townsfolk there were not more given than mortals generally to any eager attempt at exactness in the representation to themselves of what did not come under their own senses. Not only young virgins of that town, but grey-bearded men also, were often in haste to conjecture how a new acquaintance might be wrought into their purposes, contented with very vague knowledge as to the way in which life had been shaping him for that instrumentality. Middlemarch, in fact, counted on swallowing Lydgate and assimilating him very comfortably.

CHAPTER XVI

"All that in woman is adored
In thy fair self I find—
For the whole sex can but afford"
The handsome and the kind."
—Sir Charles Sedley.

The question whether Mr. Tyke should be appointed as salaried chaplain to the hospital was an exciting topic to the Middlemarchers; and Lydgate heard it discussed in a way that threw much light on the power exercised in the town by Mr. Bulstrode. The banker was evidently a ruler, but there was an opposition party, and even among his supporters there were some who allowed it to be seen that their support was a compromise, and who frankly stated their impression that the general scheme of things, and especially the casualties of trade, required you to hold a candle to the devil.

Mr. Bulstrode's power was not due simply to his being a country banker, who knew the financial secrets of most traders in the town and could touch the springs of their credit; it was fortified by a beneficence that was at once ready and severe—

ready to confer obligations, and severe in watching the result. He had gathered, as an industrious man always at his post, a chief share in administering the town charities, and his private charities were both minute and abundant. He would take a great deal of pains about apprenticing Tegg the shoemaker's son, and he would watch over Tegg's churchgoing; he would defend Mrs. Strype the washerwoman against Stubbs's unjust exaction on the score of her drying-ground, and he would himself scrutinise a calumny against Mrs. Strype. His private minor loans were numerous, but he would inquire strictly into the circumstances both before and after. In this way a man gathers a domain in his neighbours' hope and fear as well as gratitude; and power, when once it has got into that subtle region, propagates itself, spreading out of all proportion to its external means. It was a principle with Mr. Bulstrode to gain as much power as possible, that he might use it for the glory of God. He went through a great deal of spiritual conflict and inward argument in order to adjust his motives, and make clear to himself what God's glory required. But, as we have seen, his motives were not always rightly appreciated. There were many crass minds in Middlemarch whose reflective scales could only weigh things in the lump; and they had a strong suspicion that since Mr. Bulstrode could not enjoy life in their fashion, eating and drinking so little as he did, and worreting himself about everything, he must have a sort of vampire's feast in the sense of mastery.

The subject of the chaplaincy came up at Mr. Vincy's table when Lydgate was dining there, and the family connection with Mr. Bulstrode did not, he observed, prevent some freedom of remark even on the part of the host himself, though his reasons against the proposed arrangement turned entirely on his objection to Mr. Tyke's sermons, which were all doctrine, and his preference for Mr. Farebrother, whose sermons were free from that taint. Mr. Vincy liked well enough the notion of the chaplain's having a salary, supposing it were given to Farebrother, who was as good a little fellow as ever breathed, and the best preacher anywhere, and companionable too.

"What line shall you take, then?" said Mr. Chichely, the coroner, a great coursing comrade of Mr. Vincy's.

"Oh, I'm precious glad I'm not one of the Directors now. I shall vote for referring the matter to the Directors and the Medical Board together. I shall roll some of my responsibility on your shoulders, Doctor," said Mr. Vincy, glancing first at

Dr. Sprague, the senior physician of the town, and then at Lydgate, who sat opposite. "You medical gentlemen must consult which sort of black draught you will prescribe, eh, Mr. Lydgate?"

"I know little of either," said Lydgate; "but in general, appointments are apt to be made too much a question of personal liking. The fittest man for a particular post is not always the best fellow or the most agreeable. Sometimes, if you wanted to get a reform, your only way would be to pension off the good fellows whom everybody is fond of, and put them out of the question."

Dr. Sprague, who was considered the physician of most "weight," though Dr. Minchin was usually said to have more "penetration," divested his large heavy face of all expression, and looked at his wineglass while Lydgate was speaking. Whatever was not problematical and suspected about this young man—for example, a certain showiness as to foreign ideas, and a disposition to unsettle what had been settled and forgotten by his elders—was positively unwelcome to a physician whose standing had been fixed thirty years before by a treatise on Meningitis, of which at least one copy marked "own" was bound in calf. For my part I have some fellow-feeling with Dr. Sprague: one's self-satisfaction is an untaxed kind of property which it is very unpleasant to find depreciated.

Lydgate's remark, however, did not meet the sense of the company. Mr. Vincy said, that if he could have *his* way, he would not put disagreeable fellows anywhere.

"Hang your reforms!" said Mr. Chichely. "There's no greater humbug in the world. You never hear of a reform, but it means some trick to put in new men. I hope you are not one of the 'Lancet's' men, Mr. Lydgate—wanting to take the coronership out of the hands of the legal profession: your words appear to point that way."

"I disapprove of Wakley," interposed Dr. Sprague, "no man more: he is an ill-intentioned fellow, who would sacrifice the respectability of the profession, which everybody knows depends on the London Colleges, for the sake of getting some notoriety for himself. There are men who don't mind about being kicked blue if they can only get talked about. But Wakley is right sometimes," the Doctor added, judicially. "I could mention one or two points in which Wakley is in the right."

"Oh, well," said Mr. Chichely, "I blame no man for standing up in favour of his own cloth; but, coming to argument, I should like to know how a coroner is to judge of evidence if he has not had a legal training?"

"In my opinion," said Lydgate, "legal training only makes a man more incompetent in questions that require knowledge of another kind. People talk about evidence as if it could really be weighed in scales by a blind Justice. No man can judge what is good evidence on any particular subject, unless he knows that subject well. A lawyer is no better than an old woman at a *post-mortem* examination. How is he to know the action of a poison? You might as well say that scanning verse will teach you to scan the potato crops."

"You are aware, I suppose, that it is not the coroner's business to conduct the *post-mortem*, but only to take the evidence of the medical witness?" said Mr. Chichely, with some scorn.

"Who is often almost as ignorant as the coroner himself," said Lydgate. "Questions of medical jurisprudence ought not to be left to the chance of decent knowledge in a medical witness, and the coroner ought not to be a man who will believe that strychnine will destroy the coats of the stomach if an ignorant practitioner happens to tell him so."

Lydgate had really lost sight of the fact that Mr. Chichely was his Majesty's coroner, and ended innocently with the question, "Don't you agree with me, Dr. Sprague?"

"To a certain extent—with regard to populous districts, and in the metropolis," said the Doctor. "But I hope it will be long before this part of the country loses the services of my friend Chichely, even though it might get the best man in our profession to succeed him. I am sure Vincy will agree with me."

"Yes, yes, give me a coroner who is a good coursing man," said Mr. Vincy, jovially. "And in my opinion, you're safest with a lawyer. Nobody can know everything. Most things are 'visitation of God.' And as to poisoning, why, what you want to know is the law. Come, shall we join the ladies?"

Lydgate's private opinion was that Mr. Chichely might be the very coroner without bias as to the coats of the stomach, but he had not meant to be personal. This was one of the difficulties of moving in good Middlemarch society: it was dangerous to insist on knowledge as a qualification for any salaried office. Fred Vincy had called Lydgate a prig, and now Mr. Chichely was inclined to call him prick-eared; especially when, in the drawing-room, he seemed to be making himself eminently agreeable to Rosamond, whom he had easily monopolised in a *tête-à-tête*, since Mrs. Vincy herself sat at the tea-table. She resigned no domestic function to her daughter; and the matron's blooming good-natured face, with the too volatile pink strings floating from her fine throat, and her cheery manners to husband and children, was certainly among the great attractions of the Vincy house—attractions which made it all the easier to fall in love with the daughter. The tinge of unpretentious, inoffensive vulgarity in Mrs. Vincy gave more effect to Rosamond's refinement, which was beyond what Lydgate had expected.

Certainly, small feet and perfectly turned shoulders aid the impression of refined manners, and the right thing said seems quite astonishingly right when it is accompanied with exquisite curves of lip and eyelid. And Rosamond could say the right thing; for she was clever with that sort of cleverness which catches every tone except the humorous. Happily she never attempted to joke, and this perhaps was the most decisive mark of her cleverness.

She and Lydgate readily got into conversation. He regretted that he had not heard her sing the other day at Stone Court. The only pleasure he allowed himself during the latter part of his stay in Paris was to go and hear music.

"You have studied music, probably?" said Rosamond.

"No, I know the notes of many birds, and I know many melodies by ear; but the music that I don't know at all, and have no notion about, delights me—affects me. How stupid the world is that it does not make more use of such a pleasure within its reach!"

"Yes, and you will find Middlemarch very tuneless. There are hardly any good musicians. I only know two gentlemen who sing at all well."

"I suppose it is the fashion to sing comic songs in a rhythmic way, leaving you to fancy the tune—very much as if it were tapped on a drum?"

"Ah, you have heard Mr. Bowyer," said Rosamond, with one of her rare smiles. "But we are speaking very ill of our neighbours."

Lydgate was almost forgetting that he must carry on the conversation, in thinking how lovely this creature was, her garment seeming to be made out of the faintest blue sky, herself so immaculately blond, as if the petals of some gigantic flower had just opened and disclosed her; and yet with this infantine blondness showing so much ready, self-possessed grace. Since he had had the memory of Laure, Lydgate had lost all taste for large-eyed silence: the divine cow no longer attracted him, and Rosamond was her very opposite. But he recalled himself, "You will let me hear some music to-night, I hope."

"I will let you hear my attempts, if you like," said Rosamond. "Papa is sure to insist on my singing. But I shall tremble before you, who have heard the best singers in Paris. I have heard very little: I have only once been to London. But our organist at St. Peter's is a good musician, and I go on studying with him."

"Tell me what you saw in London."

"Very little." (A more naïve girl would have said, "Oh, everything!" But Rosamond knew better.) "A few of the ordinary sights, such as raw country girls are always taken to."

"Do you call yourself a raw country girl?" said Lydgate, looking at her with an involuntary emphasis of admiration, which made Rosamond blush with pleasure. But she remained simply serious, turned her long neck a little, and put up her hand to touch her wondrous hair-plaits—an habitual gesture with her as pretty as any movements of a kitten's paw. Not that Rosamond was in the least like a kitten: she was a sylph caught young and educated at Mrs. Lemon's.

"I assure you my mind is raw," she said immediately; "I pass at Middlemarch. I am not afraid of talking to our old neighbours. But I am really afraid of you."

"An accomplished woman almost always knows more than we men, though her knowledge is of a different sort. I am sure you could teach me a thousand things—as an exquisite bird could teach a bear if there were any common language between them. Happily, there is a common language between women and men, and so the bears can get taught."

"Ah, there is Fred beginning to strum! I must go and hinder him from jarring all your nerves," said Rosamond, moving to the other side of the room, where Fred having opened the piano, at his father's desire, that Rosamond might give them some music, was parenthetically performing "Cherry Ripe!" with one hand. Able men who have passed their examinations will do these things sometimes, not less than the plucked Fred.

"Fred, pray defer your practising till to-morrow; you will make Mr. Lydgate ill," said Rosamond. "He has an ear."

Fred laughed, and went on with his tune to the end.

Rosamond turned to Lydgate, smiling gently, and said, "You perceive, the bears will not always be taught."

"Now then, Rosy!" said Fred, springing from the stool and twisting it upward for her, with a hearty expectation of enjoyment. "Some good rousing tunes first."

Rosamond played admirably. Her master at Mrs. Lemon's school (close to a county town with a memorable history that had its relics in church and castle) was one of those excellent musicians here and there to be found in our provinces, worthy to compare with many a noted Kapellmeister in a country which offers more plentiful conditions of musical celebrity. Rosamond, with the executant's instinct, had seized his manner of playing, and gave forth his large rendering of noble music with the precision of an echo. It was almost startling, heard for the first time. A hidden soul seemed to be flowing forth from Rosamond's fingers; and so indeed it was, since souls live on in perpetual echoes, and to all fine expression there goes somewhere an originating activity, if it be only that of an interpreter. Lydgate was taken possession of, and began to believe in her as something exceptional. After all, he thought, one need not be surprised to find the rare conjunctions of nature under circumstances apparently unfavourable: come where they may, they always depend on conditions that are not obvious. He sat looking at her, and did not rise to pay her any compliments, leaving that to others, now that his admiration was deepened.

Her singing was less remarkable, but also well trained, and sweet to hear as a chime perfectly in tune. It is true she sang "Meet me by moonlight" and "I've been roaming;" for mortals must share the fashions of their time, and none but the ancients can be always classical. But Rosamond could also sing "Black-eyed Susan" with effect, or Haydn's canzonets, or "Voi, che sapete," or "Batti, batti"—she only wanted to know what her audience liked.

Her father looked round at the company, delighting in their admiration. Her mother sat, like a Niobe before her troubles, with her youngest little girl on her lap, softly beating the child's hand up and down in time to the music. And Fred, notwithstanding his general scepticism about Rosy, listened to her music with perfect allegiance, wishing he could do the same thing on his flute. It was the pleasantest family party that Lydgate had seen since he came to Middlemarch. The Vincys had the readiness to enjoy, the rejection of all anxiety, and the belief in life as a merry lot, which made a house exceptional in most county towns at that time, when Evangelicalism had cast a certain suspicion as of plague-infection over the few amusements which survived in the provinces. At the Vincys' there was always whist, and the card-tables stood ready now, making some of the company secretly impatient of the music. Before it ceased Mr. Farebrother came in—a handsome, broad-chested but otherwise small man, about forty, whose black was very threadbare: the brilliancy was all in his quick grey eyes. He came like a pleasant change in the light, arresting little Louisa with fatherly nonsense as she was being led out of the room by Miss Morgan, greeting everybody with some special word, and seeming to condense more talk into ten minutes than had been held all through the evening. He claimed from Lydgate the fulfilment of a promise to come and see him. "I can't let you off, you know, because I have some beetles to show you. We collectors feel an interest in every new man till he has seen all we have to show him."

But soon he swerved to the whist-table, rubbing his hands and saying, "Come now, let us be serious! Mr. Lydgate? not play? Ah! you are too young and light for this kind of thing."

Lydgate said to himself that the clergyman whose abilities were so painful to Mr. Bulstrode appeared to have found an agreeable resort in this certainly not erudite household. He could half understand it: the good-humour, the good looks of elder and younger, and the provision for passing the time without any labour of intelligence, might make the house beguiling to people who had no particular use for their odd hours.

Everything looked blooming and joyous except Miss Morgan, who was brown, dull, and resigned, and altogether, as Mrs. Vincy often said, just the sort of person for a governess. Lydgate did not mean to pay many such visits himself. They were a wretched waste of the evenings; and now, when he had talked a little more to Rosamond, he meant to excuse himself and go.

"You will not like us at Middlemarch, I feel sure," she said, when the whist-players were settled. "We are very stupid, and you have been used to something quite different."

"I suppose all country towns are pretty much alike," said Lydgate. "But I have noticed that one always believes one's own town to be more stupid than any other. I have made up my mind to take Middlemarch as it comes, and shall be much obliged if the town will take me in the same way. I have certainly found some charms in it which are much greater than I had expected."

"You mean the rides towards Tipton and Lowick; every one is pleased with those," said Rosamond, with simplicity.

"No, I mean something much nearer to me."

Rosamond rose and reached her netting, and then said, "Do you care about dancing at all? I am not quite sure whether clever men ever dance."

"I would dance with you, if you would allow me."

"Oh!" said Rosamond, with a slight deprecatory laugh. "I was only going to say that we sometimes have dancing, and I wanted to know whether you would feel insulted if you were asked to come."

"Not on the condition I mentioned."

After this chat Lydgate thought that he was going, but on moving towards the whist-tables, he got interested in watching Mr. Farebrother's play, which was masterly, and also his face, which was a striking mixture of the shrewd and the mild. At ten o'clock supper was brought in (such were the customs of Middlemarch), and there was punch-drinking; but Mr. Farebrother had only a glass of water. He was winning, but there seemed to be no reason why the renewal of rubbers should end, and Lydgate at last took his leave.

But as it was not eleven o'clock, he chose to walk in the brisk air towards the tower of St. Botolph's, Mr. Farebrother's church, which stood out dark, square, and massive against the starlight. It was the oldest church in Middlemarch; the living, however, was but a vicarage worth barely four hundred a-year. Lydgate had heard that, and he wondered now whether Mr. Farebrother cared about the money he won at cards; thinking "He seems a very pleasant fellow, but Bulstrode may have his good reasons." Many things would be easier to Lydgate if it should turn out that Mr. Bulstrode was generally justifiable. "What is his religious doctrine to me, if he carries some good notions along with it? One must use such brains as are to be found."

These were actually Lydgate's first meditations as he walked away from Mr. Vincy's, and on this ground I fear that many ladies will consider him hardly worthy of their attention. He thought of Rosamond and her music only in the second place; and though, when her turn came, he dwelt on the image of her for the rest of his walk, he felt no agitation, and had no sense that any new current had set into his life. He could not marry yet; he wished not to marry for several years; and therefore he was not ready to entertain the notion of being in love with a girl whom he happened to admire. He did admire Rosamond exceedingly; but that madness which had once beset him about Laure was not, he thought, likely to recur in relation to any other woman. Certainly, if falling in love had been at all in question, it would have been quite safe with a creature like this Miss Vincy, who had just the kind of intelligence one would desire in a woman—polished, refined, docile, lending itself to finish in all the delicacies of life, and enshrined in a body which expressed this with a force of demonstration that excluded the need for other evidence. Lydgate felt sure that if ever he married, his wife would have that feminine radiance, that distinctive womanhood which must be classed with flowers and music, that sort of beauty which by its very nature was virtuous, being moulded only for pure and delicate joys.

But since he did not mean to marry for the next five years—his more pressing business was to look into Louis' new book on Fever, which he was specially interested in, because he had known Louis in Paris, and had followed many anatomical demonstrations in order to ascertain the specific differences of typhus and typhoid. He went home and read far into the smallest hour, bringing a much more testing vision of details and relations into this pathological study than he had ever thought it necessary to apply to the complexities of love and marriage, these being subjects on which he felt himself amply informed by literature, and that traditional wisdom which is handed down in the genial conversation of men. Whereas Fever had obscure conditions, and gave him that delightful labour of the imagination which is not mere arbitrariness, but the exercise of disciplined power—combining and constructing with the clearest eye for probabilities and the fullest obedience to knowledge; and then, in yet more energetic alliance with impartial Nature, standing aloof to invent tests by which to try its own work.

Many men have been praised as vividly imaginative on the strength of their profuseness in indifferent drawing or cheap narration:—reports of very poor talk going on in distant orbs; or portraits of Lucifer coming down on his bad errands as a large ugly man with bat's wings and spurts of phosphorescence; or exaggerations of wantonness that seem to reflect life in a diseased dream. But these kinds of inspiration Lydgate regarded as rather vulgar and vinous compared with the imagination that reveals subtle actions inaccessible by any sort of lens, but tracked in that outer darkness through long pathways of necessary sequence by the inward light which is the last refinement of Energy, capable of bathing even the ethereal atoms in its ideally illuminated space. He for his part had tossed away all cheap inventions where ignorance finds itself able and at ease: he was enamoured of that arduous invention which is the very eye of research, provisionally framing its object and correcting it to more and more exactness of relation; he wanted to pierce the obscurity of those minute processes which prepare human misery and joy, those invisible thoroughfares which are the first lurking-places of anguish, mania, and crime, that delicate poise and transition which determine the growth of happy or unhappy consciousness.

As he threw down his book, stretched his legs towards the embers in the grate, and clasped his hands at the back of his head, in that agreeable after-glow of excitement when thought lapses from examination of a specific object into a suffusive sense of its connections with all the rest of our existence—seems, as it were, to throw itself on its back after vigorous swimming and float with the repose of unexhausted strength—Lydgate felt a triumphant delight in his studies, and something like pity for those less lucky men who were not of his profession.

"If I had not taken that turn when I was a lad," he thought, "I might have got into some stupid draught-horse work or other, and lived always in blinkers. I should never have been happy in any profession that did not call forth the highest intellectual strain, and yet keep me in good warm contact with my neighbours. There is nothing like the medical profession for that: one can have the exclusive scientific life that touches the distance and befriend the old fogies in the parish too. It is rather harder for a clergyman: Farebrother seems to be an anomaly."

This last thought brought back the Vincys and all the pictures of the evening. They floated in his mind agreeably enough, and as he took up his bed-candle his lips were curled with that incipient smile which is apt to accompany agreeable recollections. He was an ardent fellow, but at present his ardour was absorbed in love of his work and in the ambition of making his life recognised as a factor in the better life of mankind—like other heroes of science who had nothing but an obscure country practice to begin with.

Poor Lydgate! or shall I say, Poor Rosamond! Each lived in a world of which the other knew nothing. It had not occurred to Lydgate that he had been a subject of eager meditation to

Rosamond, who had neither any reason for throwing her marriage into distant perspective, nor any pathological studies to divert her mind from that ruminating habit, that inward repetition of looks, words, and phrases, which makes a large part in the lives of most girls. He had not meant to look at her or speak to her with more than the inevitable amount of admiration and compliment which a man must give to a beautiful girl; indeed, it seemed to him that his enjoyment of her music had remained almost silent, for he feared falling into the rudeness of telling her his great surprise at her possession of such accomplishment. But Rosamond had registered every look and word, and estimated them as the opening incidents of a preconceived romance—incidents which gather value from the foreseen development and climax. In Rosamond's romance it was not necessary to imagine much about the inward life of the hero, or of his serious business in the world: of course, he had a profession and was clever, as well as sufficiently handsome; but the piquant fact about Lydgate was his good birth, which distinguished him from all Middlemarch admirers, and presented marriage as a prospect of rising in rank and getting a little nearer to that celestial condition on earth in which she would have nothing to do with vulgar people, and perhaps at last associate with relatives quite equal to the county people who looked down on the Middlemarchers. It was part of Rosamond's cleverness to discern very subtly the faintest aroma of rank, and once when she had seen the Miss Brookes accompanying their uncle at the county assizes, and seated among the aristocracy, she had envied them, notwithstanding their plain dress.

If you think it incredible that to imagine Lydgate as a man of family could cause thrills of satisfaction which had anything to do with the sense that she was in love with him, I will ask you to use your power of comparison a little more effectively, and consider whether red cloth and epaulets have never had an influence of that sort. Our passions do not live apart in locked chambers, but, dressed in their small wardrobe of notions, bring their provisions to a common table and mess together, feeding out of the common store according to their appetite.

Rosamond, in fact, was entirely occupied not exactly with Tertius Lydgate as he was in himself, but with his relation to her; and it was excusable in a girl who was accustomed to hear that all young men might, could, would be, or actually were in love with her, to believe at once that Lydgate could be no exception. His looks and words meant more to her than other men's, because she cared more for them: she thought of them diligently, and diligently attended to that perfection of appearance, behaviour, sentiments, and all other elegancies, which would find in Lydgate a more adequate admirer than she had yet been conscious of.

For Rosamond, though she would never do anything that was disagreeable to her, was industrious; and now more than ever she was active in sketching her landscapes and market-carts and portraits of friends, in practising her music, and in being from morning till night her own standard of a perfect lady, having always an audience in her own consciousness, with sometimes the not unwelcome addition of a more variable external audience in the numerous visitors of the house. She found time also to read the best novels, and even the second best, and she knew much poetry by heart. Her favourite poem was "Lalla Rookh."

"The best girl in the world! He will be a happy fellow who gets her!" was the sentiment of the elderly gentlemen who visited the Vincys; and the rejected young men thought of trying again, as is the fashion in country towns where the horizon is not thick with coming rivals. But Mrs. Plymdale thought that Rosamond had been educated to a ridiculous pitch, for what was the use of accomplishments which would be all laid aside as soon as she was married? While her aunt Bulstrode, who had a sisterly faithfulness towards her brother's family, had two sincere wishes for Rosamond—that she might show a more serious turn of mind, and that she might meet with a husband whose wealth corresponded to her habits.

CHAPTER XVII

The clerkly person smiled and said,
Promise was a pretty maid,
But being poor she died unwed.

THE Rev. Camden Farebrother, whom Lydgate went to see the next evening, lived in an old parsonage, built of stone, venerable enough to match the church which it looked out upon. All the furniture too in the house was old, but with another grade of age—that of Mr. Farebrother's father and grandfather. There were painted white chairs, with gilding and wreaths on them, and some lingering red silk damask with slits in it. There were engraved portraits of Lord Chancellors and other celebrated lawyers of the last century; and there were old pier-glasses to reflect them, as well as the little satin-wood tables and the sofas resembling a prolongation of uneasy chairs, all standing in relief against the dark wainscot. This was the physiognomy of the drawing-room into which Lydgate was shown; and there were three ladies to receive him, who were also old-fashioned, and of a faded but genuine respectability: Mrs. Farebrother, the Vicar's white-haired mother, befrilled and kerchiefed with dainty cleanliness, upright, quick-eyed, and still under seventy; Miss Noble, her sister, a tiny old lady of meeker aspect, with frills and kerchief decidedly more worn and mended; and Miss Winifred Farebrother, the Vicar's elder sister, well-looking like himself, but nipped and subdued as single women are apt to be who spend their lives in uninterrupted subjection to their elders. Lydgate had not expected to see so quaint a group: knowing simply that Mr. Farebrother was a bachelor, he had thought of being ushered into a snuggery where the chief furniture would probably be books and collections of natural objects. The Vicar himself seemed to wear rather a changed aspect, as most men do when acquaintances made elsewhere see them for the first time in their own homes; some indeed showing like an actor of genial parts disadvantageously cast for the curmudgeon in a new piece. This was not the case with Mr. Farebrother: he seemed a trifle milder and more silent, the chief talker being his mother, while he only put in a good-humoured moderating remark here and there. The old lady was evidently accustomed to tell her company what they ought to think, and to regard no subject as quite safe without her steering. She was afforded leisure for this function by having all her little wants attended to by Miss Winifred. Meanwhile tiny Miss Noble carried on her arm a small basket, into which she diverted a bit of sugar, which she had first dropped in her saucer as if by mistake; looking round furtively afterwards, and reverting to her tea-cup with a small innocent noise as of a tiny timid quadruped. Pray think no ill of Miss Noble. That basket held small savings from her more portable food, destined for the children of her poor friends among whom she trotted on fine mornings; fostering and petting all needy creatures being so spontaneous a delight to her, that she regarded it much as if it had been a pleasant vice that she was addicted to. Perhaps she was conscious of being tempted to steal from those who had much that she might give to those who had nothing, and carried in her conscience the guilt of that repressed desire. One must be poor to know the luxury of giving!

Mrs. Farebrother welcomed the guest with a lively formality and precision. She presently informed him that they were not often in want of medical aid in that house. She had brought up her children to wear flannel and not to over-eat themselves, which last habit she considered the chief reason why people needed doctors. Lydgate pleaded for those whose fathers and mothers had over-eaten themselves, but Mrs. Farebrother held that view of things dangerous: Nature was more just than that; it would be easy for any felon to say that his ancestors ought to have been hanged instead of him. If those who had bad fathers and mothers were bad themselves, they were hanged for that. There was no need to go back on what you couldn't see.

"My mother is like old George the Third," said the Vicar, "she objects to metaphysics."

"I object to what is wrong, Camden. I say, keep hold of a few plain truths, and make everything square with them. When I was young, Mr. Lydgate, there never was any question about right and wrong. We knew our catechism, and that was enough; we learned our creed and our duty. Every respectable Church person had the same opinions. But now, if you speak out of the Prayer-book itself, you are liable to be contradicted."

"That makes rather a pleasant time of it for those who like to maintain their own point," said Lydgate.

"But my mother always gives way," said the Vicar, slyly.

"No, no, Camden, you must not lead Mr. Lydgate into a mistake about *me*. I shall never show that disrespect to my parents, to give up what they taught me. Any one may see what comes of turning. If you change once, why not twenty times?"

"A man might see good arguments for changing once, and not see them for changing again," said Lydgate, amused with the decisive old lady.

"Excuse me there. If you go upon arguments, they are never wanting, when a man has no constancy of mind. My father never changed, and he preached plain moral sermons without arguments, and was a good man—few better. When you get me a good man made out of arguments, I will get you a good dinner with reading you the cookery-book. That's my opinion, and I think anybody's stomach will bear me out."

"About the dinner certainly, mother," said Mr. Farebrother.

"It is the same thing, the dinner or the man. I am nearly seventy, Mr. Lydgate, and I go upon experience. I am not likely to follow new lights, though there are plenty of them here as elsewhere. I say, they came in with the mixed stuffs that will neither wash nor wear. It was not so in my youth: a Churchman was a Churchman, and a clergyman, you might be pretty sure, was a gentleman, if nothing else. But now he may be no better than a Dissenter, and want to push aside my son on pretence of doctrine. But whoever may wish to push him aside, I am proud to say, Mr. Lydgate, that he will compare with any preacher in this kingdom, not to speak of this town, which is but a low standard to go by; at least, to my thinking, for I was born and bred at Exeter."

"A mother is never partial," said Mr. Farebrother, smiling. "What do you think Tyke's mother says about him?"

"Ah, poor creature! what indeed?" said Mrs. Farebrother, her sharpness blunted for the moment by her confidence in maternal judgments. "She says the truth to herself, depend upon it."

"And what is the truth?" said Lydgate. "I am curious to know."

"Oh, nothing bad at all," said Mr. Farebrother. "He is a zealous fellow: not very learned, and not very wise, I think—because I don't agree with him."

"Why, Camden!" said Miss Winifred, "Griffin and his wife told me only to-day, that Mr. Tyke said they should have no more coals if they came to hear you preach."

Mrs. Farebrother laid down her knitting, which she had resumed after her small allowance of tea and toast, and looked at her son as if to say "You hear that?" Miss Noble said, "Oh, poor things! poor things!" in reference, probably, to the double loss of preaching and coal. But the Vicar answered quietly—

"That is because they are not my parishioners. And I don't think my sermons are worth a load of coals to them."

"Mr. Lydgate," said Mrs. Farebrother, who could not let this pass, "you don't know my son: he always undervalues himself. I tell him he is undervaluing the God who made him, and made him a most excellent preacher."

"That must be a hint for me to take Mr. Lydgate away to my study, mother," said the Vicar, laughing. "I promised to show you my collection," he added, turning to Lydgate; "shall we go?"

All three ladies remonstrated. Mr. Lydgate ought not to be hurried away without being allowed to accept another cup of tea: Miss Winifred had abundance of good tea in the pot. Why was Camden in such haste to take a visitor to his den? There was nothing but pickled vermin, and drawers full of blue-bottles and moths, with no carpet on the floor. Mr. Lydgate must excuse it. A game at cribbage would be far better. In short, it was plain that a vicar might be adored by his womankind as the king of men and preachers, and yet be held by them to stand in much need of their direction. Lydgate, with the usual shallowness of a young bachelor, wondered that Mr. Farebrother had not taught them better.

"My mother is not used to my having visitors who can take any interest in my hobbies," said the Vicar, as he opened the door of his study, which was indeed as bare of luxuries for the body as the ladies had implied, unless a short porcelain pipe and a tobacco-box were to be excepted.

"Men of your profession don't generally smoke," he said. Lydgate smiled and shook his head. "Nor of mine either, properly, I suppose. You will hear that pipe alleged against me by Bulstrode and Company. They don't know how pleased the devil would be if I gave it up."

"I understand. You are of an excitable temper, and want a sedative. I am heavier, and should get idle with it. I should rush into idleness, and stagnate there with all my might."

"And you mean to give it all to your work. I am some ten or twelve years older than you, and have come to a compromise. I feed a weakness or two lest they should get clamorous. See," continued the Vicar, opening several small drawers, "I fancy I have made an exhaustive study of the entomology of this district. I am going on both with the fauna and flora; but I have at least done my insects well. We are singularly rich in orthoptera: I don't know whether—Ah! you have got hold of that glass jar—you are looking into that instead of my drawers. You don't really care about these things?"

"Not by the side of this lovely anencephalous monster. I have never had time to give myself much to natural history. I was early bitten with an interest in structure, and it is what lies most directly in my profession. I have no hobby besides. I have the sea to swim in there."

"Ah! you are a happy fellow," said Mr. Farebrother, turning on his heel and beginning to fill his pipe. "You don't know what it is to want spiritual tobacco—bad emendations of old texts, or small items about a variety of *Aphis Brassicæ*, with the well-known signature of Philomicron, for the 'Twaddler's Magazine'; or a learned treatise on the entomology of the Pentateuch, including all the insects not mentioned, but probably met with by the Israelites in their passage through the desert; with a monograph on the Ant, as treated by Solomon, showing the harmony of the Book of Proverbs with the results of modern research. You don't mind my fumigating you?"

Lydgate was more surprised at the openness of this talk than at its implied meaning—that the Vicar felt himself not altogether in the right vocation. The neat fitting-up of drawers and shelves, and the bookcase filled with expensive illustrated books on Natural History, made him think again of the winnings at cards and their destination. But he was beginning to wish that the very best construction of everything that Mr. Farebrother did should be the true one. The Vicar's frankness seemed not of the repulsive sort that comes from an uneasy consciousness seeking to forestall the judgment of others, but simply the relief of a desire to do with as little pretence as possible. Apparently he was not without a sense that his freedom of speech might seem premature, for he presently said—

"I have not yet told you that I have the advantage of you, Mr. Lydgate, and know you better than you know me. You remember Trawley, who shared your apartment at Paris for some time? I was a correspondent of his, and he told me a good deal about you. I was not quite sure when you first came that you were the same man. I was very glad when I found that you were. Only I don't forget that you have not had the like prologue about me."

Lydgate divined some delicacy of feeling here, but did not half understand it. "By the way," he said, "what has become of Trawley? I have quite lost sight of him. He was hot on the French social systems, and talked of going to the Backwoods to found a sort of Pythagorean community. Is he gone?"

"Not at all. He is practising at a German bath, and has married a rich patient."

"Then my notions wear the best, so far," said Lydgate, with a short scornful laugh. "He would have it, the medical profession was an inevitable system of humbug. I said, the fault was in the men—men who truckle to lies and folly. Instead of preaching against humbug outside the walls, it might be better to set up a disinfecting apparatus within. In short—I am reporting my own conversation—you may be sure I had all the good sense on my side."

"Your scheme is a good deal more difficult to carry out than the Pythagorean community, though. You have not only got the old Adam in yourself against you, but you have got all those descendants of the original Adam who form the society around you. You see, I have paid twelve or thirteen years more than you for my knowledge of difficulties. But"—Mr. Farebrother broke off a moment, and then added, "you are eyeing that glass vase again. Do you want to make an exchange? You shall not have it without a fair barter."

"I have some sea-mice—fine specimens—in spirits. And I will throw in Robert Brown's new thing—'Microscopic Observations on the Pollen of Plants'—if you don't happen to have it already."

"Why, seeing how you long for the monster, I might ask a higher price. Suppose I ask you to look through my drawers and agree with me about all my new species?" The Vicar, while he talked in this way, alternately moved about with his pipe in his mouth, and returned to hang rather fondly over his drawers. "That would be good discipline, you know, for a young doctor who has to please his patients in Middlemarch. You must learn to be bored, remember. However, you shall have the monster on your own terms."

"Don't you think men overrate the necessity for humouring everybody's nonsense, till they get despised by the very fools they humour?" said Lydgate, moving to Mr. Farebrother's side, and looking rather absently at the insects ranged in fine gradation, with names subscribed in exquisite writing. "The shortest way is to make your value felt, so that people must put up with you whether you flatter them or not."

"With all my heart. But then you must be sure of having the value, and you must keep yourself independent. Very few men can do that. Either you slip out of service altogether, and become good for nothing, or you wear the harness and draw a good deal where your yoke-fellows pull you. But do look at these delicate orthoptera!"

Lydgate had after all to give some scrutiny to each drawer, the Vicar laughing at himself, and yet persisting in the exhibition.

"Apropos of what you said about wearing harness," Lydgate began, after they had sat down, "I made up my mind some time ago to do with as little of it as possible. That was why I determined not to try anything in London, for a good many years at least. I didn't like what I saw when I was studying there—so much empty bigwiggism, and obstructive trickery. In the country, people have less pretension to knowledge, and are less of companions, but for that reason they affect one's *amour-propre* less: one makes less bad blood, and can follow one's own course more quietly."

"Yes—well—you have got a good start; you are in the right profession, the work you feel yourself most fit for. Some people miss that, and repent too late. But you must not be too sure of keeping your independence."

"You mean of family ties?" said Lydgate, conceiving that these might press rather tightly on Mr. Farebrother.

"Not altogether. Of course they make many things more difficult. But a good wife—a good unworldly woman—may really help a man, and keep him more independent. There's a parishioner of mine—a fine fellow, but who would hardly have pulled through as he has done without his wife. Do you know the Garths? I think they were not Peacock's patients."

"No; but there is a Miss Garth at old Featherstone's, at Lowick."

"Their daughter: an excellent girl."

"She is very quiet—I have hardly noticed her."

"She has taken notice of you, though, depend upon it."

"I don't understand," said Lydgate; he could hardly say "Of course."

"Oh, she gauges everybody. I prepared her for confirmation—she is a favourite of mine."

Mr. Farebrother puffed a few moments in silence, Lydgate not caring to know more about the Garths. At last the Vicar laid down his pipe, stretched out his legs, and turned his bright eyes with a smile towards Lydgate, saying—

"But we Middlemarchers are not so tame as you take us to be. We have our intrigues and our parties. I am a party man, for example, and Bulstrode is another. If you vote for me you will offend Bulstrode."

"What is there against Bulstrode?" said Lydgate, emphatically.

"I did not say there was anything against him except that. If you vote against him you will make him your enemy."

"I don't know that I need mind about that," said Lydgate, rather proudly; "but he seems to have good ideas about hospitals, and he spends large sums on useful public objects. He might help me a good deal in carrying out my ideas. As to his religious notions—why, as Voltaire said, incantations will destroy a flock of sheep if administered with a certain quantity of arsenic. I look for the man who will bring the arsenic, and don't mind about his incantations."

"Very good. But then you must not offend your arsenic-man. You will not offend me, you know," said Mr. Farebrother, quite unaffectedly. "I don't translate my own convenience into other people's duties. I am opposed to Bulstrode in many ways. I don't like the set he belongs to: they are a narrow ignorant set, and do more to make their neighbours uncomfortable than to make them better. Their system is a sort of worldly-spiritual cliqueism: they really look on the rest of mankind as a doomed carcase which is to nourish them for heaven. But," he added, smilingly, "I don't say that Bulstrode's new hospital is a bad thing; and as to his wanting to oust me from the old one—why, if he thinks me a mischievous fellow, he is only returning a compliment. And I am not a model clergyman —only a decent makeshift."

Lydgate was not at all sure that the Vicar maligned himself. A model clergyman, like a model doctor, ought to think his own profession the finest in the world, and take all knowledge as mere nourishment to his moral pathology and therapeutics. He only said, "What reason does Bulstrode give for superseding you?"

"That I don't teach his opinions—which he calls spiritual religion; and that I have no time to spare. Both statements are true. But then I could make time, and I should be glad of the forty pounds. That is the plain fact of the case. But let us dismiss it. I only wanted to tell you that if you vote for your arsenic-man, you are not to cut me in consequence. I can't spare you. You are a sort of circumnavigator come to settle among us, and will keep up my belief in the antipodes. Now tell me all about them in Paris."

CHAPTER XVIII

"Oh, sir, the loftiest hopes on earth
Draw lots with meaner hopes: heroic breasts,
Breathing bad air, run risk of pestilence;
Or, lacking lime-juice when they cross the Line,
May languish with the scurvy."

Some weeks passed after this conversation before the question of the chaplaincy gathered any practical import for Lydgate, and without telling himself the reason, he deferred the predetermination on which side he should give his vote. It would really have been a matter of total indifference to him—that is to say, he would have taken the more convenient side, and given his vote for the appointment of Tyke without any hesitation—if he had not cared personally for Mr. Farebrother.

But his liking for the Vicar of St. Botolph's grew with growing acquaintanceship. That, entering into Lydgate's position as a new-comer who had his own professional objects to secure, Mr. Farebrother should have taken pains rather to warn off than to obtain his interest, showed an unusual delicacy and generosity which Lydgate's nature was keenly alive to. It went along with other points of conduct in Mr. Farebrother which were exceptionally fine, and made his character resemble those southern landscapes which seem divided between natural grandeur and social slovenliness. Very few men could have been as filial and chivalrous as he was to the mother, aunt, and sister, whose dependence on him had in many ways shaped his life rather uneasily for himself; few men who feel the pressure of small needs are so nobly resolute not to dress up their inevitably self-interested desires in a pretext of better motives. In these matters he was conscious that his life would bear the closest scrutiny; and perhaps the consciousness encouraged a little defiance towards the critical strictness of persons whose celestial intimacies seemed not to improve their domestic manners, and whose lofty aims were not needed to account for their actions. Then, his preaching was ingenious and pithy, like the preaching of the English Church in its robust age, and his sermons were delivered without book. People outside his parish went to hear him; and, since to fill the church was always the most difficult part of a clergyman's function, here was another ground for a careless sense of superiority. Besides, he was a likeable man: sweet-tempered, ready-witted, frank, without grins of suppressed bitterness or other conversational flavours which make half of us an affliction to our friends. Lydgate liked him heartily, and wished for his friendship.

With this feeling uppermost, he continued to waive the question of the chaplaincy, and to persuade himself that it was not only no proper business of his, but likely enough never to vex him with a demand for his vote. Lydgate, at Mr. Bulstrode's request, was laying down plans for the internal arrangements of the new hospital, and the two were often in consultation. The banker was always presupposing that he could count in general on Lydgate as a coadjutor, but made no special recurrence to the coming decision between Tyke and Farebrother. When the General Board of the Infirmary had met, however, and Lydgate had notice that the question of the chaplaincy was thrown on a council of the directors and medical men, to meet on the following Friday, he had a vexed sense that he must make up his mind on this trivial Middlemarch business. He could not help hearing within him the distinct declaration that Bulstrode was prime minister, and that the Tyke affair was a question of office or no office; and he could not help an equally pronounced dislike to giving up the prospect of office. For his observation was constantly confirming Mr. Farebrother's assurance that the banker would not overlook opposition. "Confound their petty politics!" was one of his thoughts for three mornings in the meditative process of shaving, when he had begun to feel that he must really hold a court of conscience on this matter. Certainly there were valid things to be said against the election of Mr. Farebrother: he had too much on his hands already, especially considering how much time he spent on non-clerical occupations. Then again it was a continually repeated shock, disturbing Lydgate's esteem, that the Vicar should obviously play for the sake of money, liking the play indeed, but evidently liking some end which it served. Mr. Farebrother contended on theory for the desirability of all games, and said that Englishmen's wit was stagnant for want of them; but Lydgate felt certain that he would have played very much less but for the money. There was a billiard-room at the Green Dragon, which some anxious mothers and wives regarded as the chief temptation in Middlemarch. The Vicar was a first-rate billiard-player, and though he did not frequent the Green Dragon, there were reports that he had sometimes been there in the daytime and had won money. And as to the chaplaincy, he did not pretend that he cared for it, except for the sake of the forty pounds. Lydgate was no Puritan, but he did not care for play, and winning money at it had always seemed a meanness to him; besides, he had an ideal of life which made this subservience of conduct to the gaining of small sums thoroughly hateful to him. Hitherto in his own life his wants had been supplied without any trouble to himself, and his first impulse was always to be liberal with half-crowns as matters of no importance to a gentleman; it had never occurred to him to devise a plan for getting half-crowns. He had always known in a general way that he was not rich, but he had never felt poor, and he had no power of imagining the part which the want of money plays in determining the actions of men. Money had never been a motive to him. Hence he was not ready to frame excuses for this deliberate pursuit of small gains. It was altogether repulsive to him, and he never entered into any calculation of the ratio between the Vicar's income and his more or less necessary expenditure. It was possible that he would not have made such a calculation in his own case.

And now, when the question of voting had come, this repulsive fact told more strongly against Mr. Farebrother than it had done before. One would know much better what to do if men's characters were more consistent, and especially if one's friends were invariably fit for any function they desired to undertake! Lydgate was convinced that if there had been no valid objection to Mr. Farebrother, he would have voted for him whatever Bulstrode might have felt on the subject: he did not intend to be a vassal of Bulstrode's. On the other hand, there was Tyke, a man entirely given to his clerical office, who was simply curate at a chapel of ease in St. Peter's parish, and had time for extra duty. Nobody had anything to say against Mr. Tyke, except that they could not bear him, and suspected him of cant. Really, from his point of view, Bulstrode was thoroughly justified.

But whichever way Lydgate began to incline, there was something to make him wince; and being a proud man, he was a little exasperated at being obliged to wince. He did not like frustrating his own best purposes by getting on bad terms with Bulstrode; he did not like voting against Farebrother, and helping to deprive him of function and salary; and the question occurred whether the additional forty pounds might not leave the Vicar free from that ignoble care about winning at cards. Moreover, Lydgate did not like the consciousness that in voting for Tyke he should be voting on the side obviously convenient for himself. But would the end really be his own convenience? Other people would say so, and would allege that he was currying favour with Bulstrode for the sake of making himself important and getting on in the world. What then? He for his own part knew that if his personal prospects simply had been concerned, he would not have cared a rotten nut for the banker's friendship or enmity. What he really cared for was a medium for his work, a vehicle for his ideas; and after all, was he not bound to prefer the object of getting a good hospital, where he could demonstrate the specific distinctions of fever and test therapeutic results, before anything else connected with this chaplaincy? For the first time Lydgate was feeling the hampering threadlike pressure of small social conditions, and their frustrating complexity. At the end of his inward debate, when he set out for the hospital, his hope was really in the chance that discussion might somehow give a new aspect to the question, and make the scale dip so as to exclude the necessity for voting. I think he trusted a little also to the energy which is begotten by circumstances—some feeling rushing warmly and making resolve easy, while debate in cool blood had only made it more difficult. However it was, he did not distinctly say to himself on which side he would vote; and all the while he was inwardly resenting the subjection which had been forced upon him. It would have seemed beforehand like a ridiculous piece of bad logic that he, with his unmixed resolutions of independence and his select purpose, would find himself at the very outset in the grasp of petty alternatives, each of which was repugnant to him. In his student's chambers, he had prearranged his social action quite differently.

Lydgate was late in setting out, but Dr. Sprague, the two other surgeons, and several of the directors had arrived early; Mr. Bulstrode, treasurer and chairman, being among those who were still absent. The conversation seemed to imply that the issue was problematical, and that a majority for Tyke was not so certain as had been generally supposed. The two physicians, for a wonder, turned out to be unanimous, or rather, though of different minds, they concurred in action. Dr. Sprague, the rugged and weighty, was, as every one had foreseen, an adherent of Mr. Farebrother. The Doctor was more than suspected of having no religion, but somehow Middlemarch tolerated this deficiency in him as if he had been a Lord Chancellor; indeed it is probable that his professional weight was the more believed in, the world-old association of cleverness with the evil principle being still potent in the minds even of lady-patients who had the strictest ideas of frilling and sentiment. It was perhaps this negation in the Doctor which made his neighbours call him hard-headed and dry-witted; conditions of texture which were also held favourable to the storing of judgments connected with drugs. At all events, it is certain that if any medical man had come to Middlemarch with the reputation of having very definite religious views, of being given to prayer, and of otherwise showing an active piety, there would have been a general presumption against his medical skill.

On this ground it was (professionally speaking) fortunate for Dr. Minchin that his religious sympathies were of a general kind, and such as gave a distant medical sanction to all serious sentiment, whether of Church or Dissent, rather than any adhesion to particular tenets. If Mr. Bulstrode insisted, as he was apt to do, on the Lutheran doctrine of justification, as that by which a Church must stand or fall, Dr. Minchin in return was quite sure that man was not a mere machine or a fortuitous conjunction of atoms; if Mrs. Wimple insisted on a particular providence in relation to her stomach complaint, Dr. Minchin for his part liked to keep the mental windows open and objected to fixed limits; if the Unitarian brewer jested about the Athanasian Creed, Dr. Minchin quoted Pope's "Essay on Man." He objected to the rather free style of anecdote in which Dr. Sprague indulged, preferring well-sanctioned quotations, and liking refinement of all kinds: it was generally known that he had some kinship to a bishop, and sometimes spent his holidays at "the palace."

Dr. Minchin was soft-handed, pale-complexioned, and of rounded outline, not to be distinguished from a mild clergyman in appearance: whereas Dr. Sprague was superfluously tall; his trousers got creased at the knees, and showed an excess of boot at a time when straps seemed necessary to any dignity of bearing; you heard him go in and out, and up and down, as if he had come to see after the roofing. In short, he had weight, and might be expected to grapple with a disease and throw it; while Dr. Minchin might be better able to detect it lurking and to circumvent it. They enjoyed about equally the mysterious privilege of medical reputation, and concealed with much etiquette their contempt for each other's skill. Regarding themselves as Middlemarch institutions, they were ready to combine against all innovators, and against non-professionals given to interference. On this ground they were both in their hearts equally averse to Mr. Bulstrode, though Dr. Minchin had never been in open hostility with him, and never differed from him without elaborate explanation to Mrs. Bulstrode, who had found that Dr. Minchin alone understood her constitution. A layman who pried into the professional conduct of medical men, and was always obtruding his reforms,—though he was less directly embarrassing to the two physicians than to the surgeon-apothecaries who attended paupers by contract, was nevertheless offensive to the professional nostril as such; and Dr. Minchin shared fully in the new pique against Bulstrode, excited by his apparent determination to patronise Lydgate. The long-established practitioners, Mr. Wrench and Mr. Toller, were just now standing apart and having a friendly colloquy, in which they agreed that Lydgate was a jackanapes, just made to serve Bulstrode's purpose. To non-medical friends they had already concurred in praising the other young practitioner, who had come into the town on Mr. Peacock's retirement without further recommendation than his own merits and such argument for solid professional acquirement as might be gathered from his having apparently wasted no time on other branches of knowledge. It was clear that Lydgate, by not dispensing drugs, intended to cast imputations on his equals, and also to obscure the limit between his own rank as a general practitioner and that of the physicians, who, in the interest of the profession, felt bound to maintain its various grades. Especially against a man who had not been to either of the English universities and enjoyed the absence of anatomical and bedside study there, but came with a libellous pretension to experience in Edinburgh and Paris, where observation might be abundant indeed, but hardly sound.

Thus it happened that on this occasion Bulstrode became identified with Lydgate, and Lydgate with Tyke; and owing to this variety of interchangeable names for the chaplaincy question, diverse minds were enabled to form the same judgment concerning it.

Dr. Sprague said at once bluntly to the group assembled when he entered, "I go for Farebrother. A salary, with all my heart. But why take it from the Vicar? He has none too much—has to insure his life, besides keeping house, and doing a vicar's charities. Put forty pounds in his pocket and you'll do no harm. He's a good fellow, is Farebrother, with as little of the parson about him as will serve to carry orders."

"Ho, ho! Doctor," said old Mr. Powderell, a retired ironmonger of some standing—his interjection being something between a laugh and a Parliamentary disapproval. "We must let you have your say. But what we have to consider is not anybody's income—it's the souls of the poor sick people"—here Mr. Powderell's voice and face had a sincere pathos in them. "He is a real Gospel preacher, is Mr. Tyke. I should vote against my conscience if I voted against Mr. Tyke—I should indeed."

"Mr. Tyke's opponents have not asked any one to vote against his conscience, I believe," said Mr. Hackbutt, a rich tanner of fluent speech, whose glittering spectacles and erect hair were turned with some severity towards innocent Mr. Powderell. "But in my judgment it behoves us, as Directors, to consider whether we will regard it as our whole business to carry out propositions emanating from a single quarter. Will any member of the committee aver that he would have entertained the idea of displacing the gentleman who has always discharged the function of chaplain here, if it had not been suggested to him by parties whose disposition it is to regard every institution of this town as a machinery for carrying out their own views? I tax no man's motives: let them lie between himself and a higher Power; but I do say, that there are influences at work here which are incompatible with genuine independence, and that a crawling servility is usually dictated by circumstances which gentlemen so conducting themselves could not afford either morally or financially to avow. I myself am a layman, but I have given no inconsiderable attention to the divisions in the Church and . . ."

"Oh, damn the divisions!" burst in Mr. Frank Hawley, lawyer and town-clerk, who rarely presented himself at the board, but now looked in hurriedly, whip in hand. "We have nothing to do with them here. Farebrother has been doing the work—what there was—without pay, and if pay is to be given, it should be given to him. I call it a confounded job to take the thing away from Farebrother."

"I think it would be as well for gentlemen not to give their remarks a personal bearing," said Mr. Plymdale. "I shall vote for the appointment of Mr. Tyke, but I should not have known, if Mr. Hackbutt hadn't hinted it, that I was a Servile Crawler."

"I disclaim any personalities. I expressly said, if I may be allowed to repeat, or even to conclude what I was about to say——"

"Ah, here's Minchin!" said Mr. Frank Hawley; at which everybody turned away from Mr. Hackbutt, leaving him to feel the uselessness of superior gifts in Middlemarch. "Come, Doctor, I must have you on the right side, eh?"

"I hope so," said Dr. Minchin, nodding and shaking hands here and there. "At whatever cost to my feelings."

"If there's any feeling here, it should be feeling for the man who is turned out, I think," said Mr. Frank Hawley.

"I confess I have feelings on the other side also. I have a divided esteem," said Dr. Minchin, rubbing his hands. "I consider Mr. Tyke an exemplary man—none more so—and I believe him to be proposed from unimpeachable motives. I, for my part, wish that I could give him my vote. But I am constrained to take a view of the case which gives the preponderance to Mr. Farebrother's claims. He is an amiable man, an able preacher, and has been longer among us."

Old Mr. Powderell looked on, sad and silent. Mr. Plymdale settled his cravat, uneasily.

"You don't set up Farebrother as a pattern of what a clergyman ought to be, I hope," said Mr. Larcher, the eminent carrier, who had just come in. "I have no ill-will towards him, but I think we owe something to the public, not to speak of anything higher, in these appointments. In my opinion Farebrother is too lax for a clergyman. I don't wish to bring up particulars against him; but he will make a little attendance here go as far as he can."

"And a devilish deal better than too much," said Mr. Hawley, whose bad language was notorious in that part of the county. "Sick people can't bear so much praying and preaching. And that methodistical sort of religion is bad for the spirits—bad for the inside, eh!" he added, turning quickly round to the four medical men who were assembled.

But any answer was dispensed with by the entrance of three gentlemen, with whom there were greetings more or less cordial. These were the Reverend Edward Thesiger, Rector of St. Peter's, Mr. Bulstrode, and our friend Mr. Brooke of Tipton, who had lately allowed himself to be put on the board of directors in his turn, but had never before attended, his attendance now being due to Mr. Bulstrode's exertions. Lydgate was the only person still expected.

Every one now sat down, Mr. Bulstrode presiding, pale and self-restrained as usual. Mr. Thesiger, a moderate evangelical, wished for the appointment of his friend Mr. Tyke, a zealous, able man, who, officiating at a chapel of ease, had not a cure of souls too extensive to leave him ample time for the new duty. It was desirable that chaplaincies of this kind should be entered on with a fervent intention: they were peculiar opportunities for spiritual influence; and while it was good that a salary should be allotted, there was the more need for scrupulous watching lest the office should be perverted into a mere question of salary. Mr. Thesiger's manner had so much quiet propriety that objectors could only simmer in silence.

Mr. Brooke believed that everybody meant well in the matter. He had not himself attended to the affairs of the Infirmary, though he had a strong interest in whatever was for the benefit of Middlemarch, and was most happy to meet the gentlemen present on any public question—"any public question, you know," Mr. Brooke repeated, with his nod of perfect understanding. "I am a good deal occupied as a magistrate, and in the collection of documentary evidence, but I regard my time as being at the disposal of the public—and, in short, my friends have convinced me that a chaplain with a salary—a salary, you know—is a very good thing, and I am happy to be able to come here and vote for the appointment of Mr. Tyke, who, I understand, is an unexceptionable man, apostolic and eloquent and everything of that kind—and I am the last man to withhold my vote—under the circumstances, you know."

"It seems to me that you have been crammed with one side of the question, Mr. Brooke," said Mr. Frank Hawley, who was afraid of nobody, and was a Tory suspicious of electioneering intentions. "You don't seem to know that one of the worthiest men we have has been doing duty as chaplain here for years without pay, and that Mr. Tyke is proposed to supersede him."

"Excuse me, Mr. Hawley," said Mr. Bulstrode. "Mr. Brooke has been fully informed of Mr. Farebrother's character and position."

"By his enemies," flashed out Mr. Hawley.

"I trust there is no personal hostility concerned here," said Mr. Thesiger.

"I'll swear there is, though," retorted Mr. Hawley.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Bulstrode, in a subdued tone, "the merits of the question may be very briefly stated, and if any one present doubts that every gentleman who is about to give his vote has not been fully informed, I can now recapitulate the considerations that should weigh on either side."

"I don't see the good of that," said Mr. Hawley. "I suppose we all know whom we mean to vote for. Any man who wants to do justice does not wait till the last minute to hear both sides of the question. I have no time to lose, and I propose that the matter be put to the vote at once."

A brief but still hot discussion followed before each person wrote "Tyke" or "Farebrother" on a piece of paper and slipped it into a glass tumbler; and in the meantime Mr. Bulstrode saw Lydgate enter.

"I perceive that the votes are equally divided at present," said Mr. Bulstrode, in a clear biting voice. Then, looking up at Lydgate—

"There is a casting-vote still to be given. It is yours, Mr. Lydgate: will you be good enough to write?"

"The thing is settled now," said Mr. Wrench, rising. "We all know how Mr. Lydgate will vote."

"You seem to speak with some peculiar meaning, sir," said Lydgate, rather defiantly, and keeping his pencil suspended.

"I merely mean that you are expected to vote with Mr. Bulstrode. Do you regard that meaning as offensive?"

"It may be offensive to others. But I shall not desist from voting with him on that account."

Lydgate immediately wrote down "Tyke."

So the Rev. Walter Tyke became chaplain to the Infirmary, and Lydgate continued to work with Mr. Bulstrode. He was really uncertain whether Tyke were not the more suitable candidate, and yet his consciousness told him that if he had been quite free from indirect bias he should have voted for Mr. Farebrother. The affair of the chaplaincy remained a sore point in his memory as a case in which this petty medium of Middlemarch had been too strong for him. How could a man be satisfied with a decision between such alternatives and under such circumstances? No more than he can be satisfied with his hat, which he has chosen from among such shapes as the resources of the age offer him, wearing it at best with a resignation which is chiefly supported by comparison.

But Mr. Farebrother met him with the same friendliness as before. The character of the publican and sinner is not always practically incompatible with that of the modern Pharisee, for the majority of us scarcely see more distinctly the faultiness of our own conduct than the faultiness of our own arguments, or the dulness of our own jokes. But the Vicar of St. Botolph's had certainly escaped the slightest tincture of the Pharisee, and by dint of admitting to himself that he was too much as other men were, he had become remarkably unlike them in this—that he could excuse others for thinking slightly of him, and could judge impartially of their conduct even when it told against him.

"The world has been too strong for *me*, I know," he said one day to Lydgate. "But then I am not a mighty man—I shall never be a man of renown. The choice of Hercules is a pretty fable; but Prodicus makes it easy work for the hero, as if the first resolves were enough. Another story says that he came to hold the distaff, and at last wore the Nessus shirt. I suppose one good resolve might keep a man right if everybody else's resolve helped him."

The Vicar's talk was not always inspiriting: he had escaped being a Pharisee, but he had not escaped that low estimate of possibilities which we rather hastily arrive at as an inference from our own failure. Lydgate thought that there was a pitiable infirmity of will in Mr. Farebrother.

CHAPTER XIX

"L'altra vedete ch'ha fatto alla guancia
Della sua palma, sospirando, letto."
—*Purgatorio*, vii.

When George the Fourth was still reigning over the privacies of Windsor, when the Duke of Wellington was Prime Minister, and Mr. Vincy was mayor of the old corporation in Middlemarch, Mrs. Casaubon, born Dorothea Brooke, had taken her wedding journey to Rome. In those days the world in general was more ignorant of good and evil by forty years than it is at present. Travellers did not often carry full information on Christian art either in their heads or their pockets; and even the most brilliant English critic of the day mistook the flower-flushed tomb of the ascended Virgin for an ornamental vase due to the painter's fancy. Romanticism, which has helped to fill some dull blanks with love and knowledge, had not yet penetrated the times with its leaven and entered into everybody's food; it was fermenting still as a distinguishable vigorous enthusiasm in certain long-haired German artists at Rome, and the youth of other nations who worked or idled near them were sometimes caught in the spreading movement.

One fine morning a young man whose hair was not immoderately long, but abundant and curly, and who was otherwise English in his equipment, had just turned his back on the Belvedere Torso in the Vatican and was looking out on the magnificent view of the mountains from the adjoining round vestibule. He was sufficiently absorbed not to notice the approach of a dark-eyed, animated German who came up to him and placing a hand on his shoulder, said with a strong accent, "Come here, quick! else she will have changed her pose."

Quickness was ready at the call, and the two figures passed lightly along by the Meleager towards the hall where the reclining Ariadne, then called the Cleopatra, lies in the marble voluptuousness of her beauty, the drapery folding around her with a petal-like ease and tenderness. They were just in time to see another figure standing against a pedestal near the reclining marble: a breathing blooming girl, whose form, not shamed by the Ariadne, was clad in Quakerish grey drapery; her long cloak, fastened at the neck, was thrown backward from her arms, and one beautiful ungloved hand pillowed her cheek, pushing somewhat backward the white beaver bonnet which made a sort of halo to her face around the simply braided dark-brown hair. She was not looking at the sculpture, probably not thinking of it: her large eyes were fixed dreamily on a streak of sunlight which fell across the floor. But she became conscious of the two strangers who suddenly paused as if to contemplate the Cleopatra, and, without looking at them, immediately turned away to join a maid-servant and courier who were loitering along the hall at a little distance off.

"What do you think of that for a fine bit of antithesis?" said the German, searching in his friend's face for responding admiration, but going on volubly without waiting for any other answer. "There lies antique beauty, not corpse-like even in death, but arrested in the complete contentment of its sensuous perfection: and here stands beauty in its breathing life, with the consciousness of Christian centuries in its bosom. But she should be dressed as a nun; I think she looks almost what you call a Quaker; I would dress her as a nun in my picture. However, she is married; I saw her wedding-ring on that wonderful left hand, otherwise I should have thought the sallow *Geistlicher* was her father. I saw him parting from her a good while ago, and just now I found her in that magnificent pose. Only think! he is perhaps rich, and would like to have her portrait taken. Ah! it is no use looking after her—there she goes! Let us follow her home!"

"No, no," said his companion, with a little frown.

"You are singular, Ladislaw. You look struck together. Do you know her?"

"I know that she is married to my cousin," said Will Ladislaw, sauntering down the hall with a preoccupied air, while his German friend kept at his side and watched him eagerly.

"What, the *Geistlicher*? He looks more like an uncle—a more useful sort of relation."

"He is not my uncle. I tell you he is my second cousin," said Ladislaw, with some irritation.

"Schön, schön. Don't be snappish. You are not angry with me for thinking Mrs. Second-Cousin the most perfect young Madonna I ever saw?"

"Angry? nonsense. I have only seen her once before, for a couple of minutes, when my cousin introduced her to me, just before I left England. They were not married then. I didn't know they were coming to Rome."

"But you will go to see them now—you will find out what they have for an address—since you know the name. Shall we go to the post? And you could speak about the portrait."

"Confound you, Naumann! I don't know what I shall do. I am not so brazen as you."

"Bah! that is because you are dilettantish and amateurish. If you were an artist, you would think of Mistress Second-Cousin as antique form animated by Christian sentiment—a sort of Christian Antigone—sensuous force controlled by spiritual passion."

"Yes, and that your painting her was the chief outcome of her existence—the divinity passing into higher completeness and all but exhausted in the act of covering your bit of canvas. I am amateurish if you like: I do *not* think that all the universe is straining towards the obscure significance of your pictures."

"But it is, my dear!—so far as it is straining through me, Adolf Naumann: that stands firm," said the good-natured painter, putting a hand on Ladislaw's shoulder, and not in the least disturbed by the unaccountable touch of ill-humour in his tone. "See now! My existence pre-supposes the existence of the whole universe—does it *not*? and my function is to paint—and as a painter I have a conception which is altogether *genialisch*, of your great-aunt or second grandmother as a subject for a picture; therefore, the universe is straining towards that picture through that particular hook or claw which is put forth in the shape of me—not true?"

"But how if another claw in the shape of me is straining to thwart it?—the case is a little less simple then."

"Not at all: the result of the struggle is the same thing—picture or no picture—logically." Will could not resist this imperturbable temper, and the cloud in his face broke into sunshiny laughter.

"Come now, my friend—you will help?" said Naumann, in a hopeful tone.

"No; nonsense, Naumann! English ladies are not at everybody's service as models. And you want to express too much with your painting. You would only have made a better or worse portrait with a background which every connoisseur would give a different reason for or against. And what is a portrait of a woman? Your painting and Plastik are poor stuff after all. They perturb and dull conceptions instead of raising them. Language is a finer medium."

"Yes, for those who can't paint," said Naumann. "There you have perfect right. I did not recommend you to paint, my friend."

The amiable artist carried his sting, but Ladislaw did not choose to appear stung. He went on as if he had not heard.

"Language gives a fuller image, which is all the better for being vague. After all, the true seeing is within; and painting stares at you with an insistent imperfection. I feel that especially about representations of women. As if a woman were a mere coloured superficies! You must wait for movement and tone. There is a difference in their very breathing: they change from moment to moment.—This woman whom you have just seen, for example: how would you paint her voice, pray? But her voice is much diviner than anything you have seen of her."

"I see, I see. You are jealous. No man must presume to think that he can paint your ideal. This is serious, my friend! Your great-aunt! 'Der Neffe als Onkel' in a tragic sense—*ungeheuer!*"

"You and I shall quarrel, Naumann, if you call that lady my aunt again."

"How is she to be called then?"

"Mrs. Casaubon."

"Good. Suppose I get acquainted with her in spite of you, and find that she very much wishes to be painted?"

"Yes, suppose!" said Will Ladislaw, in a contemptuous undertone, intended to dismiss the subject. He was conscious of being irritated by ridiculously small causes, which were half of his own creation. Why was he making any fuss about Mrs. Casaubon? And yet he felt as if something had happened to him with regard to her. There are characters which are continually creating collisions and nodes for themselves in dramas which nobody is prepared to act with them. Their susceptibilities will clash against objects that remain innocently quiet.

CHAPTER XX

A child forsaken, waking suddenly,
Whose gaze afeard on all things round doth rove,
And seeth only that it cannot see
The meeting eyes of love.

Two hours later, Dorothea was seated in an inner room or boudoir of a handsome apartment in the Via Sistina.

I am sorry to add that she was sobbing bitterly, with such abandonment to this relief of an oppressed heart as a woman habitually controlled by pride on her own account and thoughtfulness for others will sometimes allow herself when she feels securely alone. And Mr. Casaubon was certain to remain away for some time at the Vatican.

Yet Dorothea had no distinctly shapen grievance that she could state even to herself; and in the midst of her confused thought and passion, the mental act that was struggling forth into clearness was a self-accusing cry that her feeling of desolation was the fault of her own spiritual poverty. She had married the man of her choice, and with the advantage over most girls that she had contemplated her marriage chiefly as the beginning of new duties: from the very first she had thought of Mr. Casaubon as having a mind so much above her own, that he must often be claimed by studies which she could not entirely share; moreover, after the brief narrow experience of her girlhood she was beholding Rome, the city of visible history, where the past of a whole hemisphere seems moving in funeral procession with strange ancestral images and trophies gathered from afar.

But this stupendous fragmentariness heightened the dream-like strangeness of her bridal life. Dorothea had now been five weeks in Rome, and in the kindly mornings when autumn and winter seemed to go hand in hand like a happy aged couple one of whom would presently survive in chiller loneliness, she had driven about at first with Mr. Casaubon, but of late chiefly with Tantripp and their experienced courier. She had been led through the best galleries, had been taken to the chief points of view, had been shown the greatest ruins and the most glorious churches, and she had ended by oftenest choosing to drive out to the Campagna where she could feel alone with the earth and sky, away from the oppressive masquerade of ages, in which her own life too seemed to become a masque with enigmatical costumes.

To those who have looked at Rome with the quickening power of a knowledge which breathes a growing soul into all historic shapes, and traces out the suppressed transitions which unite all contrasts, Rome may still be the spiritual centre and interpreter of the world. But let them conceive one more historical contrast: the gigantic broken revelations of that Imperial and Papal city thrust abruptly on the notions of a girl who had been brought up in English and Swiss Puritanism, fed on meagre Protestant histories and on art chiefly of the hand-screen sort; a girl whose ardent nature turned all her small allowance of knowledge into principles, fusing her actions into their mould, and whose quick emotions gave the most abstract things the quality of a pleasure or a pain; a girl who had lately become a wife, and from the enthusiastic acceptance of untried duty found herself plunged in tumultuous preoccupation with her personal lot. The weight of unintelligible Rome might lie easily on bright nymphs to whom it formed a background for the brilliant picnic of Anglo-foreign society; but Dorothea had no such defence against deep impressions. Ruins and basilicas, palaces and colossi, set in the midst of a sordid present, where all that was living and warm-blooded seemed sunk in the deep degeneracy of a superstition divorced from reverence; the dimmer but yet eager Titanic life gazing and struggling on walls and ceilings; the long vistas of white forms whose marble eyes seemed to hold the monotonous light of an alien world: all this vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual, mixed confusedly with the signs of breathing forgetfulness and degradation, at first jarred her as with an electric shock, and then urged themselves on her with that ache belonging to a glut of confused ideas which check the flow of emotion. Forms both pale and glowing took possession of her young sense, and fixed themselves in her memory even when she was not thinking of them, preparing strange associations which remained through her after-years. Our moods are apt to bring with them images which succeed each other like the magic-lantern pictures of a doze; and in certain states of dull forlornness Dorothea all her life continued to see the vastness of St. Peter's, the huge bronze canopy, the excited intention in the attitudes and garments of the prophets and evangelists in the mosaics above, and the red drapery which was being hung for Christmas spreading itself everywhere like a disease of the retina.

Not that this inward amazement of Dorothea's was anything very exceptional: many souls in their young nudity are tumbled out among incongruities and left to "find their feet" among them, while their elders go about their business. Nor can I suppose that when Mrs. Casaubon is discovered in a fit of weeping six weeks after her wedding, the situation will be regarded as tragic. Some discouragement, some faintness of heart at the new real future which replaces the imaginary, is not unusual, and we do not expect people to be deeply moved by what is not unusual. That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity.

However, Dorothea was crying, and if she had been required to state the cause, she could only have done so in some such general words as I have already used: to have been driven to be more particular would have been like trying to give a history of the lights and shadows; for that new real future which was replacing the imaginary drew its material from the endless minutiæ by which her view of Mr. Casaubon and her wifely relation, now that she was married to him, was gradually changing with the secret motion of a watch-hand from what it had been in her maiden dream. It was too early yet for her fully to recognise or at least admit the change, still more for her to have readjusted that devotedness which was so necessary a part of her mental life that she was almost sure sooner or later to recover it. Permanent rebellion, the disorder of a life without some loving reverent resolve, was not possible to her; but she was now in an interval when the very force of her nature heightened its confusion. In this way, the early months of marriage often are times of critical tumult—whether that of a shrimp-pool or of deeper waters—which afterwards subsides into cheerful peace.

But was not Mr. Casaubon just as learned as before? Had his forms of expression changed, or his sentiments become less laudable? O waywardness of womanhood! did his chronology fail him, or his ability to state not only a theory but the names of those who held it; or his provision for giving the heads of any subject on demand? And was not Rome the place in all the world to give free play to such accomplishments? Besides, had not Dorothea's enthusiasm especially dwelt on the prospect of relieving the weight and perhaps the sadness with which great tasks lie on him who has to achieve them?—And that such weight pressed on Mr. Casaubon was only plainer than before.

All these are crushing questions; but whatever else remained the same, the light had changed, and you cannot find the pearly dawn at noonday. The fact is unalterable, that a fellow-mortal with whose nature you are acquainted solely through the brief entrances and exits of a few imaginative weeks called courtship, may, when seen in the continuity of married companionship, be disclosed as something better or worse than what you have preconceived, but will certainly not appear altogether the same. And it would be astonishing to find how soon the change is felt if we had no kindred changes to compare with it. To share lodgings with a brilliant dinner-companion, or to see your favourite politician in the Ministry, may bring about changes quite as rapid: in these cases too we begin by knowing little and believing much, and we sometimes end by inverting the quantities.

Still, such comparisons might mislead, for no man was more incapable of flashy make-believe than Mr. Casaubon: he was as genuine a character as any ruminant animal, and he had not actively assisted in creating any illusions about himself. How was it that in the weeks since her marriage, Dorothea had not distinctly observed but felt with a stifling depression, that the large vistas and wide fresh air which she had dreamed of finding in her husband's mind were replaced by anterooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhither? I suppose it was that in courtship everything is regarded as provisional and preliminary, and the smallest sample of virtue or accomplishment is taken to guarantee delightful stores which the broad leisure of marriage will reveal. But the door-sill of marriage once crossed, expectation is concentrated on the present. Having once embarked on your marital voyage, it is impossible not to be aware that you make no way and that the sea is not within sight—that, in fact, you are exploring an enclosed basin.

In their conversation before marriage, Mr. Casaubon had often dwelt on some explanation or questionable detail of which Dorothea did not see the bearing; but such imperfect coherence seemed due to the brokenness of their intercourse, and, supported by her faith in their future, she had listened with fervid patience to a recitation of possible arguments to be brought against Mr. Casaubon's entirely new view of the Philistine god Dagon and other fish-deities, thinking that hereafter she should see this subject which touched him so nearly from the same high ground whence doubtless it had become so important to him. Again, the matter-of-course statement and tone of dismissal with which he treated what to her were the most stirring thoughts, was easily accounted for as belonging to the sense of haste and preoccupation in which she herself shared during their engagement. But now, since they had been in Rome, with all the depths of her emotion roused to tumultuous activity, and with life made a new problem by new elements, she had been becoming more and more aware, with a certain terror, that her mind was continually sliding into inward fits of anger and repulsion, or else into forlorn weariness. How far the judicious Hooker or any other hero of erudition would have been the same at Mr. Casaubon's time of life, she had no means of knowing, so that he could not have the advantage of comparison; but her husband's way of commenting on the strangely impressive objects around them had begun to affect her with a sort of mental shiver: he had perhaps the best intention of acquitting himself worthily, but only of acquitting himself. What was fresh to her mind was worn out to his; and such capacity of thought and feeling as had ever been stimulated in him by the general life of mankind had long shrunk to a sort of dried preparation, a lifeless embalmment of knowledge.

When he said, "Does this interest you, Dorothea? Shall we stay a little longer? I am ready to stay if you wish it,"—it seemed to her as if going or staying were alike dreary. Or, "Should you like to go to the Farnesina, Dorothea? It contains celebrated frescoes designed or painted by Raphael, which most persons think it worth while to visit."

"But do you care about them?" was always Dorothea's question.

"They are, I believe, highly esteemed. Some of them represent the fable of Cupid and Psyche, which is probably the romantic invention of a literary period, and cannot, I think, be reckoned as a genuine mythical product. But if you like these wall-paintings we can easily drive thither; and you will then, I think, have seen the chief works of Raphael, any of which it were a pity to omit in a visit to Rome. He is the painter who has been held to combine the most complete grace of form with sublimity of expression. Such at least I have gathered to be the opinion of cognoscenti."

This kind of answer given in a measured official tone, as of a clergyman reading according to the rubric, did not help to justify the glories of the Eternal City, or to give her the hope that if she knew more about them the world would be joyously illuminated for her. There is hardly any contact more depressing to a young ardent creature than that of a mind in which years full of knowledge seem to have issued in a blank absence of interest or sympathy.

On other subjects indeed Mr. Casaubon showed a tenacity of occupation and an eagerness which are usually regarded as the effect of enthusiasm, and Dorothea was anxious to follow this spontaneous direction of his thoughts, instead of being made to feel that she dragged him away from it. But she was gradually ceasing to expect with her former delightful confidence that she should see any wide opening where she followed him. Poor Mr. Casaubon himself was lost among small closets and winding stairs, and in an agitated dimness about the Cabeiri, or in an exposure of other mythologists' ill-considered parallels, easily lost sight of any purpose which had prompted him to these labours. With his taper stuck before him he forgot the absence of windows, and in bitter manuscript remarks on other men's notions about the solar deities, he had become indifferent to the sunlight.

These characteristics, fixed and unchangeable as bone in Mr. Casaubon, might have remained longer unfelt by Dorothea if she had been encouraged to pour forth her girlish and womanly feeling—if he would have held her hands between his and listened with the delight of tenderness and understanding to all the little histories which made up her experience, and would have given her the same sort of intimacy in return, so that the past life of each could be included in their mutual knowledge and affection—or if she could have fed her affection with those childlike caresses which are the bent of every sweet woman, who has begun by showering kisses on the hard pate of her bald doll, creating a happy soul within that woodenness from the wealth of her own love. That was Dorothea's bent. With all her yearning to know what was afar from her and to be widely benignant, she had ardour enough for what was near, to have kissed Mr. Casaubon's coat-sleeve, or to have caressed his shoe-latchet, if he would have made any other sign of acceptance than pronouncing her, with his unfailing propriety, to be of a most affectionate and truly feminine nature, indicating at the same time by politely reaching a chair for her that he regarded these manifestations as rather crude and startling. Having made his clerical toilette with due care in the morning, he was prepared only for those amenities of life which were suited to the well-adjusted stiff cravat of the period, and to a mind weighted with unpublished matter.

And by a sad contradiction Dorothea's ideas and resolves seemed like melting ice floating and lost in the warm flood of which they had been but another form. She was humiliated to find herself a mere victim of feeling, as if she could know nothing except through that medium: all her strength was scattered in fits of agitation, of struggle, of despondency, and then again in visions of more complete renunciation, transforming all hard conditions into duty. Poor Dorothea! she was certainly troublesome—to herself chiefly; but this morning for the first time she had been troublesome to Mr. Casaubon.

She had begun, while they were taking coffee, with a determination to shake off what she inwardly called her selfishness, and turned a face all cheerful attention to her husband when he said, "My dear Dorothea, we must now think of all that is yet left undone, as a preliminary to our departure. I would fain have returned home earlier that we might have been at Lowick for the Christmas; but my inquiries here have been protracted beyond their anticipated period. I trust, however, that the time here has not been passed unpleasantly to you. Among the sights of Europe, that of Rome has ever been held one of the most striking and in some respects edifying. I well remember that I considered it an epoch in my life when I visited it for the first time; after the fall of Napoleon, an event which opened the Continent to travellers. Indeed I think it is one among several cities to which an extreme hyperbole has been applied—'See Rome and die:' but in your case I would propose an emendation and say, See Rome as a bride, and live thenceforth as a happy wife."

Mr. Casaubon pronounced this little speech with the most conscientious intention, blinking a little and swaying his head up and down, and concluding with a smile. He had not found marriage a rapturous state, but he had no idea of being anything else than an irreproachable husband, who would make a charming young woman as happy as she deserved to be.

"I hope you are thoroughly satisfied with our stay—I mean, with the result so far as your studies are concerned," said Dorothea, trying to keep her mind fixed on what most affected her husband.

"Yes," said Mr. Casaubon, with that peculiar pitch of voice which makes the word half a negative. "I have been led farther than I had foreseen, and various subjects for annotation have presented themselves which, though I have no direct need of them, I could not pretermit. The task, notwithstanding the assistance of my amanuensis, has been a somewhat laborious one, but your society has happily prevented me from that too continuous prosecution of thought beyond the hours of study which has been the snare of my solitary life."

"I am very glad that my presence has made any difference to you," said Dorothea, who had a vivid memory of evenings in which she had supposed that Mr. Casaubon's mind had gone too deep during the day to be able to get to the surface again. I fear there was a little temper in her reply. "I hope when we get to Lowick, I shall be more useful to you, and be able to enter a little more into what interests you."

"Doubtless, my dear," said Mr. Casaubon, with a slight bow. "The notes I have here made will want sifting, and you can, if you please, extract them under my direction."

"And all your notes," said Dorothea, whose heart had already burned within her on this subject so that now she could not help speaking with her tongue. "All those rows of volumes—will you not now do what you used to speak of?—will you not make up your mind what part of them you will use, and begin to write the book which will make your vast knowledge useful to the world? I will write to your dictation, or I will copy and extract what you tell me: I can be of no other use." Dorothea, in a most unaccountable, darkly-feminine manner, ended with a slight sob and eyes full of tears.

The excessive feeling manifested would alone have been highly disturbing to Mr. Casaubon, but there were other reasons why Dorothea's words were among the most cutting and irritating to him that she could have been impelled to use. She was as blind to his inward troubles as he to hers; she had not yet learned those hidden conflicts in her husband which claim our pity. She had not yet listened patiently to his heart-beats, but only felt that her own was beating violently. In Mr. Casaubon's ear, Dorothea's voice gave loud emphatic iteration to those muffled suggestions of consciousness which it was possible to explain as mere fancy, the illusion of exaggerated sensitiveness: always when such suggestions are unmistakably repeated from without, they are resisted as cruel and unjust. We are angered even by the full acceptance of our humiliating confessions—how much more by hearing in hard distinct syllables from the lips of a near observer, those confused murmurs which we try to call morbid, and strive against as if they were the oncoming of numbness! And this cruel outward accuser was there in the shape of a wife—nay, of a young bride, who, instead of observing his abundant pen-scratches and amplitude of paper with the uncritical awe of an elegant-minded canary-bird, seemed to present herself as a spy watching everything with a malign power of inference. Here, towards this particular point of the compass, Mr. Casaubon had a sensitiveness to match Dorothea's, and an equal quickness to imagine more than the fact. He had formerly observed with approbation her capacity for worshipping the right object; he now foresaw with sudden terror that this capacity might be replaced by presumption, this worship by the most exasperating of all criticism,—that which sees vaguely a great many fine ends and has not the least notion what it costs to reach them.

For the first time since Dorothea had known him, Mr. Casaubon's face had a quick angry flush upon it.

"My love," he said, with irritation reined in by propriety, "you may rely upon me for knowing the times and the seasons, adapted to the different stages of a work which is not to be measured by the facile conjectures of ignorant onlookers. It had been easy for me to gain a temporary effect by a mirage of baseless opinion; but it is ever the trial of the scrupulous explorer to be saluted with the impatient scorn of chatterers who attempt only the smallest achievements, being indeed equipped for no other. And it were well if all such could be admonished to discriminate judgments of which the true subject-matter lies entirely beyond their reach, from those of which the elements may be compassed by a narrow and superficial survey."

This speech was delivered with an energy and readiness quite unusual with Mr. Casaubon. It was not indeed entirely an improvisation, but had taken shape in inward colloquy, and rushed out like the round grains from a fruit when sudden heat cracks it. Dorothea was not only his wife: she was a personification of that shallow world which surrounds the ill-appreciated or desponding author.

Dorothea was indignant in her turn. Had she not been repressing everything in her except the desire to enter into some fellowship with her husband's chief interests?

"My judgment *was* a very superficial one—such as I am capable of forming," she answered, with a prompt resentment, that needed no rehearsal. "You showed me the rows of note-books—you have often spoken of them—you have often said that they wanted digesting. But I never heard you speak of the writing that is to be published. Those were very simple facts, and my judgment went no farther. I only begged you to let me be of some good to you."

Dorothea rose to leave the table and Mr. Casaubon made no reply, taking up a letter which lay beside him as if to reperuse it. Both were shocked at their mutual situation—that each should have betrayed anger towards the other. If they had been at home, settled at Lowick in ordinary life among their neighbours, the clash would have been less embarrassing: but on a wedding journey, the express object of which is to isolate two people on the ground that they are all the world to each other, the sense of disagreement is, to say the least, confounding and stultifying. To have changed your longitude extensively, and placed yourselves in a moral solitude in order to have small explosions, to find conversation difficult and to hand a glass of water without looking, can hardly be regarded as satisfactory fulfilment even to the toughest minds. To Dorothea's inexperienced sensitiveness, it seemed like a catastrophe, changing all prospects; and to Mr. Casaubon it was a new pain, he never having been on a wedding journey before, or found himself in that close union which was more of a subjection than he had been able to imagine, since this charming young bride not only obliged him to much consideration on her behalf (which he had sedulously given), but turned out to be capable of agitating him cruelly just where he most needed soothing. Instead of getting a soft fence against the cold, shadowy, unapplausive audience of his life, had he only given it a more substantial presence?

Neither of them felt it possible to speak again at present. To have reversed a previous arrangement and declined to go out would have been a show of persistent anger which Dorothea's conscience shrank from, seeing that she already began to feel herself guilty. However just her indignation might be, her ideal was not to claim justice, but to give tenderness. So when the carriage came to the door, she drove with Mr. Casaubon to the Vatican, walked with him through the stony avenue of inscriptions, and when she parted with him at the entrance to the Library, went on through the Museum out of mere listlessness as to what was around her. She had not spirit to turn round and say that she would drive anywhere. It was when Mr. Casaubon was quitting her that Naumann had first seen her, and he had entered the long gallery of sculpture at the same time with her; but here Naumann had to await Ladislaw, with whom he was to settle a bet of champagne about an enigmatical mediæval-looking figure there. After they had examined the figure, and had walked on finishing their dispute, they had parted, Ladislaw lingering behind while Naumann had gone into the Hall of Statues, where he again saw Dorothea, and saw her in that brooding abstraction which made her pose remarkable. She did not really see the streak of sunlight on the floor more than she saw the statues: she was inwardly seeing the light of years to come in her own home and over the English fields and elms and hedge-bordered highroads: and feeling that the way in which they might be filled with joyful devotedness was not so clear to her as it had been. But in Dorothea's mind there was a current into which all thought and feeling were apt sooner or later to flow—the reaching forward of the whole consciousness towards the fullest truth, the least partial good. There was clearly something better than anger and despondency.

CHAPTER XXI

> "Hire facounde eke full womanly and plain,
> No contrefeted termes had she
> To semen wise."
>
> —Chaucer.

It was in that way Dorothea came to be sobbing as soon as she was securely alone. But she was presently roused by a knock at the door, which made her hastily dry her eyes before saying, "Come in." Tantripp had brought a card, and said that there was a gentleman waiting in the lobby. The courier had told him that only Mrs. Casaubon was at home, but he said he was a relation of Mr. Casaubon's: would she see him?

"Yes," said Dorothea, without pause; "show him into the salon." Her chief impressions about young Ladislaw were that when she had seen him at Lowick she had been made aware of Mr. Casaubon's generosity towards him, and also that she had been interested in his own hesitation about his career. She was alive to anything that gave her an opportunuty for active sympathy, and at this moment it seemed as if the visit had come to shake her out of her self-absorbed discontent—to remind her of her husband's goodness, and make her feel that she had now the right to be his helpmate in all kind deeds. She waited a minute or two, but when she passed into the next room there were just signs enough that she had been crying to make her open face look more youthful and appealing than usual. She met Ladislaw with that exquisite smile of goodwill which is unmixed with vanity, and held out her hand to him. He was the elder by several years, but at that moment he looked much the younger, for his transparent complexion flushed suddenly, and he spoke with a shyness extremely unlike the ready indifference of his manner with his male companion, while Dorothea became all the calmer with a wondering desire to put him at ease.

"I was not aware that you and Mr. Casaubon were in Rome, until this morning, when I saw you in the Vatican Museum," he said. "I knew you at once—but—I mean, that I concluded Mr. Casaubon's address would be found at the Poste Restante, and I was anxious to pay my respects to him and you as early as possible."

"Pray sit down. He is not here now, but he will be glad to hear of you, I am sure," said Dorothea, seating herself unthinkingly between the fire and the light of the tall window, and pointing to a chair opposite, with the quietude of a benignant matron. The signs of girlish sorrow in her face were only the more striking. "Mr. Casaubon is much engaged; but you will leave your address—will you not?—and he will write to you."

"You are very good," said Ladislaw, beginning to lose his diffidence in the interest with which he was observing the signs of weeping which had altered her face. "My address is on my card. But if you will allow me I will call again to-morrow at an hour when Mr. Casaubon is likely to be at home."

"He goes to read in the Library of the Vatican every day, and you can hardly see him except by an appointment. Especially now. We are about to leave Rome, and he is very busy. He is usually away almost from breakfast till dinner. But I am sure he will wish you to dine with us."

Will Ladislaw was struck mute for a few moments. He had never been fond of Mr. Casaubon, and if it had not been for the sense of obligation, would have laughed at him as a Bat of erudition. But the idea of this dried-up pedant, this elaborator of small explanations about as important as the surplus stock of false antiquities kept in a vendor's back chamber, having first got this adorable young creature to marry him, and then passing his honeymoon away from her, groping after his mouldy futilities (Will was given to hyperbole)—this sudden picture stirred him with a sort of comic disgust: he was divided between the impulse to laugh aloud and the equally unseasonable impulse to burst into scornful invective. For an instant he felt that the struggle was causing a queer contortion of his mobile features, but with a good effort he resolved it into nothing more offensive than a merry smile.

Dorothea wondered; but the smile was irresistible, and shone back from her face too. Will Ladislaw's smile was delightful, unless you were angry with him beforehand: it was a gush of inward light illuminating the transparent skin as well as the eyes, and playing about every curve and line as if some Ariel were touching them with a new charm, and banishing for ever the traces of moodiness. The reflection of that smile could not but have a little merriment in it too, even under dark eyelashes still moist, as Dorothea said inquiringly, "Something amuses you?"

"Yes," said Will, quick in finding resources. "I am thinking of the sort of figure I cut the first time I saw you, when you annihilated my poor sketch with your criticism."

"My criticism?" said Dorothea, wondering still more. "Surely not. I always feel particularly ignorant about painting."

"I suspected you of knowing so much, that you knew how to say just what was most cutting. You said—I daresay you don't remember it as I do—that the relation of my sketch to nature was quite hidden from you. At least, you implied that." Will could laugh now as well as smile.

"That was really my ignorance," said Dorothea, admiring Will's good-humour. "I must have said so only because I never could see any beauty in the pictures which my uncle told me all judges thought very fine. And I have gone about with just the same ignorance in Rome. There are comparatively few paintings that I can really enjoy. At first when I enter a room where the walls are covered with frescoes, or with rare pictures, I feel a kind of awe—like a child present at great ceremonies where there are grand robes and processions; I feel myself in the presence of some higher life than my own. But when I begin to examine the pictures one by one, the life goes out of them, or else is something violent and strange to me. It must be my own dulness. I am seeing so much all at once, and not understanding half of it. That always makes one feel stupid. It is painful to be told that anything is very fine and not be able to feel that it is fine—something like being blind, while people talk of the sky."

"Oh, there is a great deal in the feeling for art which must be acquired," said Will. (It was impossible now to doubt the directness of Dorothea's confession.) "Art is an old language with a great many artificial affected styles, and sometimes the chief pleasure one gets out of knowing them is the mere sense of knowing. I enjoy the art of all sorts here immensely; but I suppose if I could pick my enjoyment to pieces I should find it made up of many different threads. There is something in daubing a little one's self, and having an idea of the process."

"You mean perhaps to be a painter?" said Dorothea, with a new direction of interest. "You mean to make painting your profession. Mr. Casaubon will like to hear that you have chosen a profession."

"No, oh no," said Will, with some coldness. "I have quite made up my mind against it. It is too one-sided a life. I have been seeing a great deal of the German artists here: I travelled from Frankfort with one of them. Some are fine, even brilliant fellows—but I should not like to get into their way of looking at the world entirely from the studio point of view."

"That I can understand," said Dorothea, cordially. "And in Rome it seems as if there were so many things which are more wanted in the world than pictures. But if you have a genius for painting, would it not be right to take that as a guide? Perhaps you might do better things than these—or different, so that there might not be so many pictures almost all alike in the same place."

There was no mistaking this simplicity, and Will was won by it into frankness. "A man must have a very rare genius to make changes of that sort. I am afraid mine would not carry me even to the pitch of doing well what has been done already, at least not so well as to make it worth while. And I should never succeed in anything by dint of drudgery. If things don't come easily to me I never get them."

"I have heard Mr. Casaubon say that he regrets your want of patience," said Dorothea, gently. She was rather shocked at this mode of taking all life as a holiday.

"Yes, I know Mr. Casaubon's opinion. He and I differ."

The slight streak of contempt in his hasty reply offended Dorothea. She was all the more susceptible about Mr. Casaubon because of her morning's trouble.

"Certainly you differ," she said, rather proudly. "I did not think of comparing you: such power of persevering devoted labour as Mr. Casaubon's is not common."

Will saw that she was offended, but this only gave an additional impulse to the new irritation of his latent dislike towards Mr. Casaubon. It was too intolerable that Dorothea should be worshipping this husband: such weakness in a woman is pleasant to no man but the husband in question. Mortals are easily tempted to pinch the life out of their neighbour's buzzing glory, and think that such killing is no murder.

"No, indeed," he answered, promptly. "And therefore it is a pity that it should be thrown away, as so much English scholarship is, for want of knowing what is being done by the rest of the world. If Mr. Casaubon read German he would save himself a great deal of trouble."

"I do not understand you," said Dorothea, startled and anxious.

"I merely mean," said Will, in an offhand way, "that the Germans have taken the lead in historical inquiries, and they laugh at results which are got by groping about in woods with a pocket-compass while they have made good roads. When I was with Mr. Casaubon I saw that he deafened himself in that direction: it was almost against his will that he read a Latin treatise written by a German. I was very sorry."

Will only thought of giving a good pinch that would annihilate that vaunted laboriousness, and was unable to imagine the mode in which Dorothea would be wounded. Young Mr. Ladislaw was not at all deep himself in German writers; but very little achievement is required in order to pity another man's shortcomings.

Poor Dorothea felt a pang at the thought that the labour of her husband's life might be void, which left her no energy to spare for the question whether this young relative who was so much obliged to him ought not to have repressed his observation. She did not even speak, but sat looking at her hands, absorbed in the piteousness of that thought.

Will, however, having given that annihilating pinch, was rather ashamed, imagining from Dorothea's silence that he had offended her still more; and having also a conscience about plucking the tail-feathers from a benefactor.

"I regretted it especially," he resumed, taking the usual course from detraction to insincere eulogy, "because of my gratitude and respect towards my cousin. It would not signify so much in a man whose talents and character were less distinguished."

Dorothea raised her eyes, brighter than usual with excited feeling, and said, in her saddest recitative, "How I wish I had learned German when I was at Lausanne! There were plenty of German teachers. But now I can be of no use."

There was a new light, but still a mysterious light, for Will in Dorothea's last words. The question how she had come to accept Mr. Casaubon—which he had dismissed when he first saw her by saying that she must be disagreeable in spite of appearances—was not now to be answered on any such short and easy method. Whatever else she might be, she was not disagreeable. She was not coldly clever and indirectly satirical, but adorably simple and full of feeling. She was an angel beguiled. It would be a unique delight to wait and watch for the melodious fragments in which her heart and soul came forth so directly and ingenuously. The Æolian harp again came into his mind.

She must have made some original romance for herself in this marriage. And if Mr. Casaubon had been a dragon who had carried her off to his lair with his talons simply and without legal forms, it would have been an unavoidable feat of heroism to release her and fall at her feet. But he was something more unmanageable than a dragon: he was a benefactor with collective society at his back, and he was at that moment entering the room in all the unimpeachable correctness of his demeanour, while Dorothea was looking animated with a newly-roused alarm and regret, and Will was looking animated with his admiring speculation about her feelings.

Mr. Casaubon felt a surprise which was quite unmixed with pleasure, but he did not swerve from his usual politeness of greeting, when Will rose and explained his presence. Mr. Casaubon was less happy than usual, and this perhaps made him look all the dimmer and more faded; else, the effect might easily have been produced by the contrast of his young cousin's appearance. The first impression on seeing Will was one of sunny brightness, which added to the uncertainty of his changing expression. Surely, his very features changed their form; his jaw looked sometimes large and sometimes small; and the little ripple in his nose was a preparation for metamorphosis. When he turned his head quickly his hair seemed to shake out light, and some persons thought they saw decided genius in this coruscation. Mr. Casaubon, on the contrary, stood rayless.

As Dorothea's eyes were turned anxiously on her husband she was perhaps not insensible to the contrast, but it was only mingled with other causes in making her more conscious of that new alarm on his behalf which was the first stirring of a pitying tenderness fed by the realities of his lot and not by her own dreams. Yet it was a source of greater freedom to her that Will was there; his young equality was agreeable, and also perhaps his openness to conviction. She felt an immense need of some one to speak to, and she had never before seen any one who seemed so quick and pliable, so likely to understand everything.

Mr. Casaubon gravely hoped that Will was passing his time profitably as well as pleasantly in Rome—had thought his intention was to remain in South Germany—but begged him to come and dine to-morrow, when he could converse more at large: at present he was somewhat weary. Ladislaw understood, and accepting the invitation immediately took his leave.

Dorothea's eyes followed her husband anxiously, while he sank down wearily at the end of a sofa, and resting his elbow supported his head and looked on the floor. A little flushed, and with bright eyes, she seated herself beside him, and said,

"Forgive me for speaking so hastily to you this morning. I was wrong. I fear I hurt you and made the day more burdensome."

"I am glad that you feel that, my dear," said Mr. Casaubon. He spoke quietly and bowed his head a little, but there was still an uneasy feeling in his eyes as he looked at her.

"But you do forgive me?" said Dorothea, with a quick sob. In her need for some manifestation of feeling she was ready to exaggerate her own fault. Would not love see returning penitence afar off, and fall on its neck and kiss it?

"My dear Dorothea—'who with repentance is not satisfied, is not of heaven nor earth:'—you do not think me worthy to be banished by that severe sentence," said Mr. Casaubon, exerting himself to make a strong statement, and also to smile faintly.

Dorothea was silent, but a tear which had come up with the sob would insist on falling.

"You are excited, my dear. And I also am feeling some unpleasant consequences of too much mental disturbance," said Mr. Casaubon. In fact, he had it in his thought to tell her that she ought not to have received young Ladislaw in his absence; but he abstained, partly from the sense that it would be ungracious to bring a new complaint in the moment of her penitent acknowledgment, partly because he wanted to avoid further agitation of himself by speech, and partly because he was too proud to betray that jealousy of disposition which was not so exhausted on his scholarly compeers that there was none to spare in other directions. There is a sort of jealousy which needs very little fire; it is hardly a passion, but a blight bred in the cloudy, damp despondency of uneasy egoism.

"I think it is time for us to dress," he added, looking at his watch. They both rose, and there was never any further allusion between them to what had passed on this day.

But Dorothea remembered it to the last with the vividness with which we all remember epochs in our experience when some dear expectation dies, or some new motive is born. To-day she had begun to see that she had been under a wild illusion in expecting a response to her feeling from Mr. Casaubon, and she had felt the waking of a presentiment that there might be a sad consciousness in his life which made as great a need on his side as on her own.

We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves: Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity, but yet it had been easier to her to imagine how she would devote herself to Mr. Casaubon, and become wise and strong in his strength and wisdom, than to conceive with that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling—an idea wrought back to the directness of sense, like the solidity of objects—that he had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference.

CHAPTER XXII

"Nous causâmes longtemps; elle était simple et bonne.
Ne sachant pas le mal, elle faisait le bien;
Des richesses du cœur elle me fit l'aumône,
Et tout en écoutant comme le cœur se donne,
Sans oser y penser, je lui donnai le mien;
Elle emporta ma vie, et n'en sut jamais rien."
—ALFRED DE MUSSET.

WILL LADISLAW was delightfully agreeable at dinner the next day, and gave no opportunity for Mr. Casaubon to show disapprobation. On the contrary it seemed to Dorothea that Will had a happier way of drawing her husband into conversation and of deferentially listening to him than she had ever observed in any one before. To be sure, the listeners about Tipton were not highly gifted! Will talked a good deal himself, but what he said was thrown in with such rapidity, and with such an unimportant air of saying something by the way, that it seemed a gay little chime after the great bell. If Will was not always perfect, this was certainly one of his good days. He described touches of incident among the poor people in Rome, only to be seen by one who could move about freely; he found himself in agreement with Mr. Casaubon as to the unsound opinions of Middleton concerning the relations of Judaism and Catholicism; and passed easily to a half-enthusiastic half-playful picture of the enjoyment he got out of the very miscellaneousness of Rome, which made the mind flexible with constant comparison, and saved you from seeing the world's ages as a set of box-like partitions without vital connection. Mr. Casaubon's studies, Will observed, had always been of too broad a kind for that, and he had perhaps never felt any such sudden effect, but for himself he confessed that Rome had given him quite a new sense of history as a whole; the fragments stimulated his imagination and made him constructive. Then occasionally, but not too often, he appealed to Dorothea, and discussed what she said, as if her sentiment were an item to be considered in the final judgment even of the Madonna di Foligno or the Laocoon. A sense of contributing to form the world's opinion makes conversation particularly cheerful; and Mr. Casaubon too was not without his pride in his young wife, who spoke better than most women, as indeed he had perceived in choosing her.

Since things were going on so pleasantly, Mr. Casaubon's statement that his labours in the Library would be suspended for a couple of days, and that after a brief renewal he should have no further reason for staying in Rome, encouraged Will to urge that Mrs. Casaubon should not go away without seeing a studio or two. Would not Mr. Casaubon take her? That sort of thing ought not to be missed; it was quite special: it was a form of life that grew like a small fresh vegetation with its population of insects on huge fossils. Will would be happy to conduct them—not to anything wearisome, only to a few examples.

Mr. Casaubon, seeing Dorothea look earnestly towards him, could not but ask her if she would be interested in such visits: he was now at her service during the whole day; and it was agreed that Will should come on the morrow and drive with them.

Will could not omit Thorwaldsen, a living celebrity about whom even Mr. Casaubon inquired, but before the day was far advanced he led the way to the studio of his friend Adolf Naumann, whom he mentioned as one of the chief renovators of Christian art, one of those who had not only revived but expanded that grand conception of supreme events as mysteries at which the successive ages were spectators, and in relation to which the great souls of all periods became as it were contemporaries. Will added that he had made himself Naumann's pupil for the nonce.

"I have been making some oil-sketches under him," said Will. "I hate copying. I must put something of my own in. Naumann has been painting the Saints drawing the Car of the Church, and I have been making a sketch of Marlowe's Tamburlaine Driving the Conquered Kings in his Chariot. I am not so ecclesiastical as Naumann, and I sometimes twit him with his excess of meaning. But this time I mean to outdo him in breadth of intention. I take Tamburlaine in his chariot for the tremendous course of the world's physical history lashing on the harnessed dynasties. In my opinion, that is a good mythical interpretation." Will here looked at Mr. Casaubon, who received this offhand treatment of symbolism very uneasily, and bowed with a neutral air.

"The sketch must be very grand, if it conveys so much," said Dorothea. "I should need some explanation even of the meaning you give. Do you intend Tamburlaine to represent earthquakes and volcanoes?"

"O yes," said Will, laughing, "and migrations of races and clearings of forests—and America and the steam-engine. Everything you can imagine!"

"What a difficult kind of shorthand!" said Dorothea, smiling towards her husband. "It would require all your knowledge to be able to read it."

Mr. Casaubon blinked furtively at Will. He had a suspicion that he was being laughed at. But it was not possible to include Dorothea in the suspicion.

They found Naumann painting industriously, but no model was present; his pictures were advantageously arranged, and his own plain vivacious person set off by a dove-coloured blouse and a maroon velvet cap, so that everything was as fortunate as if he had expected the beautiful young English lady exactly at that time.

The painter in his confident English gave little dissertations on his finished and unfinished subjects, seeming to observe Mr.

Casaubon as much as he did Dorothea. Will burst in here and there with ardent words of praise, marking out particular merits in his friend's work; and Dorothea felt that she was getting quite new notions as to the significance of Madonnas seated under inexplicable canopied thrones with the simple country as a background, and of saints with architectural models in their hands, or knives accidentally wedged in their skulls. Some things which had seemed monstrous to her were gathering intelligibility and even a natural meaning; but all this was apparently a branch of knowledge in which Mr. Casaubon had not interested himself.

"I think I would rather feel that painting is beautiful than have to read it as an enigma; but I should learn to understand these pictures sooner than yours with the very wide meaning," said Dorothea, speaking to Will.

"Don't speak of my painting before Naumann," said Will. "He will tell you, it is all *pfuscherei*, which is his most opprobrious word!"

"Is that true?" said Dorothea, turning her sincere eyes on Naumann, who made a slight grimace and said,

"O, he does not mean it seriously with painting. His walk must be *belles-lettres*. That is wi-ide."

Naumann's pronunciation of the vowel seemed to stretch the word satirically. Will did not half like it, but managed to laugh; and Mr. Casaubon, while he felt some disgust at the artist's German accent, began to entertain a little respect for his judicious severity.

The respect was not diminished when Naumann, after drawing Will aside for a moment and looking, first at a large canvas, then at Mr. Casaubon, came forward again and said,

"My friend Ladislaw thinks you will pardon me, sir, if I say that a sketch of your head would be invaluable to me for the St. Thomas Aquinas in my picture there. It is too much to ask; but I so seldom see just what I want—the idealistic in the real."

"You astonish me greatly, sir," said Mr. Casaubon, his looks improved with a glow of delight; "but if my poor physiognomy, which I have been accustomed to regard as of the commonest order, can be of any use to you in furnishing some traits for the angelical doctor, I shall feel honoured. That is to say, if the operation will not be a lengthy one; and if Mrs. Casaubon will not object to the delay."

As for Dorothea, nothing could have pleased her more, unless it had been a miraculous voice pronouncing Mr. Casaubon the wisest and worthiest among the sons of men. In that case her tottering faith would have become firm again.

Naumann's apparatus was at hand in wonderful completeness, and the sketch went on at once as well as the conversation. Dorothea sat down and subsided into calm silence, feeling happier than she had done for a long while before. Every one about her seemed good, and she said to herself that Rome, if she had only been less ignorant, would have been full of beauty; its sadness would have been winged with hope. No nature could be less suspicious than hers; when she was a child she believed in the gratitude of wasps and the honourable susceptibility of sparrows, and was proportionately indignant when their baseness was made manifest.

The adroit artist was asking Mr. Casaubon questions about English politics, which brought long answers, and Will meanwhile had perched himself on some steps in the background overlooking all.

Presently Naumann said—"Now if I could lay this by for half an hour and take it up again—come and look, Ladislaw—I think it is perfect so far."

Will vented those adjuring interjections which imply that admiration is too strong for syntax; and Naumann said in a tone of piteous regret,

"Ah—now—if I could but have had more—but you have other engagements—I could not ask it—or even to come again to-morrow."

"O let us stay!" said Dorothea. "We have nothing to do to-day except to go about, have we?" she added, looking entreatingly at Mr. Casaubon. "It would be a pity not to make the head as good as possible."

"I am at your service, sir, in the matter," said Mr. Casaubon, with polite condescension. "Having given up the interior of my head to idleness, it is as well that the exterior should work in this way."

"You are unspeakably good—now I am happy!" said Naumann, and then went on in German to Will, pointing here and there to the sketch as if he were considering that. Putting it aside for a moment, he looked round vaguely, as if seeking some occupation for his visitors, and afterwards turning to Mr. Casaubon said,

"Perhaps the beautiful bride, the gracious lady, would not be unwilling to let me fill up the time by trying to make a slight sketch of her—not, of course, as you see, for that picture—only as a single study."

Mr. Casaubon, bowing, doubted not that Mrs. Casaubon would oblige him, and Dorothea said, at once, "Where shall I put myself?"

Naumann was all apologies in asking her to stand, and allow him to adjust her attitude, to which she submitted without any of the affected airs and laughs frequently thought necessary on such occasions, when the painter said, "It is as Santa Clara that I want you to stand—leaning so, with your cheek against your hand—so—looking at that stool, please, so!"

Will was divided between the inclination to fall at the Saint's feet and kiss her robe, and the temptation to knock Naumann down while he was adjusting her arm. All this was impudence and desecration, and he repented that he had brought her.

The artist was diligent, and Will recovering himself moved about and occupied Mr. Casaubon as ingeniously as he could; but he did not in the end prevent the time from seeming long to that gentleman, as was clear from his expressing a fear that Mrs. Casaubon would be tired. Naumann took the hint and said—

"Now, sir, if you can oblige me again, I will release the lady-wife."

So Mr. Casaubon's patience held out further, and when after all it turned out that the head of Saint Thomas Aquinas would be more perfect if another sitting could be had, it was granted for the morrow. On the morrow Santa Clara too was retouched more than once. The result of all was so far from displeasing to Mr. Casaubon, that he arranged for the purchase of the picture in which Saint Thomas Aquinas sat among the doctors of the Church in a disputation too abstract to be represented, but listened to with more or less attention by an audience above. The Santa Clara, which was spoken of in the second place, Naumann declared himself to be dissatisfied with—he could not, in conscience, engage to make a worthy picture of it; so about the Santa Clara the arrangement was conditional.

I will not dwell on Naumann's jokes at the expense of Mr. Casaubon that evening, or on his dithyrambs about Dorothea's charm, in all which Will joined, but with a difference. No sooner did Naumann mention any detail of Dorothea's beauty, than Will got exasperated at his presumption: there was grossness in his choice of the most ordinary words, and what business had he to talk of her lips? She was not a woman to be spoken of as other women were. Will could not say just what he thought, but he became irritable. And yet, when after some resistance he had consented to take the Casaubons to his friend's studio, he had been allured by the gratification of his pride in being the person who could grant Naumann such an opportunity of studying her loveliness—or rather her divineness, for the ordinary phrases which might apply to mere bodily prettiness were not applicable to her. (Certainly all Tipton and its neighbourhood, as well as Dorothea herself, would have been surprised at her beauty being made so much of. In that part of the world Miss Brooke had been only a "fine young woman.")

"Oblige me by letting the subject drop, Naumann. Mrs. Casaubon is not to be talked of as if she were a model," said Will. Naumann stared at him.

"Schön! I will talk of my Aquinas. The head is not a bad type, after all. I daresay the great scholastic himself would have been flattered to have his portrait asked for. Nothing like these starchy doctors for vanity! It was as I thought: he cared much less for her portrait than his own."

"He's a cursed white-blooded pedantic coxcomb," said Will, with gnashing impetuosity. His obligations to Mr. Casaubon were not known to his hearer, but Will himself was thinking of them, and wishing that he could discharge them all by a cheque.

Naumann gave a shrug and said, "It is good they go away soon, my dear. They are spoiling your fine temper."

All Will's hope and contrivance were now concentrated on seeing Dorothea when she was alone. He only wanted her to take more emphatic notice of him; he only wanted to be something more special in her remembrance than he could yet believe himself likely to be. He was rather impatient under that open ardent goodwill, which he saw was her usual state of feeling. The remote worship of a woman throned out of their reach plays a great part in men's lives, but in most cases the worshipper longs for some queenly recognition, some approving sign by which his soul's sovereign may cheer him without descending from her high place. That was precisely what Will wanted. But there were plenty of contradictions in his imaginative demands. It was beautiful to see how Dorothea's eyes turned with wifely anxiety and beseeching to Mr. Casaubon: she would have lost some of her halo if she had been without that duteous preoccupation; and yet at the next moment the husband's sandy absorption of such nectar was too intolerable; and Will's longing to say damaging things about him was perhaps not the less tormenting because he felt the strongest reasons for restraining it.

Will had not been invited to dine the next day. Hence he persuaded himself that he was bound to call, and that the only eligible time was the middle of the day, when Mr. Casaubon would not be at home.

Dorothea, who had not been made aware that her former reception of Will had displeased her husband, had no hesitation about seeing him, especially as he might be come to pay a farewell visit. When he entered she was looking at some cameos which she had been buying for Celia. She greeted Will as if his visit were quite a matter of course, and said at once, having a cameo bracelet in her hand,

"I am so glad you are come. Perhaps you understand all about cameos, and can tell me if these are really good. I wished to have you with us in choosing them, but Mr. Casaubon objected; he thought there was not time. He will finish his work to-morrow, and we shall go away in three days. I have been uneasy about these cameos. Pray sit down and look at them."

"I am not particularly knowing, but there can be no great mistake about these little Homeric bits: they are exquisitely neat. And the colour is fine: it will just suit you."

"O, they are for my sister, who has quite a different complexion. You saw her with me at Lowick: she is light-haired and very pretty—at least I think so. We were never so long away from each other in our lives before. She is a great pet, and never was naughty in her life. I found out before I came away that she wanted me to buy her some cameos, and I should be sorry for them not to be good—after their kind." Dorothea added the last words with a smile.

"You seem not to care about cameos," said Will, seating himself at some distance from her, and observing her while she closed the cases.

"No, frankly, I don't think them a great object in life," said Dorothea.

"I fear you are a heretic about art generally. How is that? I should have expected you to be very sensitive to the beautiful everywhere."

"I suppose I am dull about many things," said Dorothea, simply. "I should like to make life beautiful—I mean everybody's life. And then all this immense expense of art, that seems somehow to lie outside life and make it no better for the world, pains one. It spoils my enjoyment of anything when I am made to think that most people are shut out from it."

"I call that the fanaticism of sympathy," said Will, impetuously. "You might say the same of landscape, of poetry, of all refinement. If you carried it out you ought to be miserable in your own goodness, and turn evil that you might have no advantage over others. The best piety is to enjoy—when you can. You are doing the most then to save the earth's character as an agreeable planet. And enjoyment radiates. It is of no use to try and take care of all the world; that is being taken care of when you feel delight—in art or in anything else. Would you turn all the youth of the world into a tragic chorus, wailing and moralising over misery? I suspect that you have some false belief in the virtues of misery, and want to make your life a martyrdom." Will had gone further than he intended, and checked himself. But Dorothea's thought was not taking just the same direction as his own, and she answered without any special emotion—

"Indeed you mistake me. I am not a sad, melancholy creature. I am never unhappy long together. I am angry and naughty—not like Celia: I have a great outburst, and then all seems glorious again. I cannot help believing in glorious things in a blind sort of way. I should be quite willing to enjoy the art here, but there is so much that I don't know the reason of—so much that seems to me a consecration of ugliness rather than beauty. The painting and sculpture may be wonderful, but the feeling is often low and brutal, and sometimes even ridiculous. Here and there I see what takes me at once as noble—something that I might compare with the Alban Mountains or the sunset from the Pincian Hill; but that makes it the greater pity that there is so little of the best kind among all that mass of things over which men have toiled so."

"Of course there is always a great deal of poor work: the rarer things want that soil to grow in."

"O dear," said Dorothea, taking up that thought into the chief current of her anxiety, "I see it must be very difficult to do anything good. I have often felt since I have been in Rome that most of our lives would look much uglier and more bungling than the pictures, if they could be put on the wall."

Dorothea parted her lips again as if she were going to say more, but changed her mind and paused.

"You are too young—it is an anachronism for you to have such thoughts," said Will energetically, with a quick shake of the head habitual to him. "You talk as if you had never known any youth. It is monstrous—as if you had had a vision of Hades in your childhood, like the boy in the legend. You have been brought up in some of those horrible notions that choose the sweetest women to devour—like Minotaurs. And now you will go and be shut up in that stone prison at Lowick: you will be buried alive. It makes me savage to think of it! I would rather never have seen you than think of you with such a prospect."

Will again feared that he had gone too far; but the meaning we attach to words depends on our feeling, and his tone of angry regret had so much kindness in it for Dorothea's heart, which had always been giving out ardour and had never been fed with much from the living beings around her, that she felt a new sense of gratitude and answered with a gentle smile.

"It is very good of you to be anxious about me. It is because you did not like Lowick yourself: you had set your heart on another kind of life. But Lowick is my chosen home."

The last sentence was spoken with an almost solemn cadence, and Will did not know what to say, since it would not be useful for him to embrace her slippers, and tell her that he would die for her: it was clear that she required nothing of the sort; and they were both silent for a moment or two, when Dorothea began again with an air of saying at last what had been in her mind beforehand.

"I wanted to ask you again about something you said the other day. Perhaps it was half of it your lively way of speaking: I notice that you like to put things strongly; I myself often exaggerate when I speak hastily."

"What was it?" said Will, observing that she spoke with a timidity quite new in her. "I have a hyperbolical tongue: it catches fire as it goes. I daresay I shall have to retract."

"I mean what you said about the necessity of knowing German—I mean, for the subjects that Mr. Casaubon is engaged in. I have been thinking about it; and it seems to me that with Mr. Casaubon's learning he must have before him the same materials as German scholars—has be not?" Dorothea's timidity was due to an indistinct consciousness that she was in the strange situation of consulting a third person about the adequacy of Mr. Casaubon's learning.

"Not exactly the same materials," said Will, thinking that he would be duly reserved. "He is not an Orientalist, you know. He does not profess to have more than second-hand knowledge there."

"But there are very valuable books about antiquities which were written a long while ago by scholars who knew nothing about these modern things; and they are still used. Why should Mr. Casaubon's not be valuable, like theirs?" said Dorothea, with more remonstrant energy. She was impelled to have the argument aloud, which she had been having in her own mind.

"That depends on the line of study taken," said Will, also getting a tone of rejoinder. "The subject Mr. Casaubon has chosen is as changing as chemistry: new discoveries are constantly making new points of view. Who wants a system on the basis of the four elements, or a book to refute Paracelsus? Do you not see that it is no use now to be crawling a little way after men of the last century—men like Bryant—and correcting their mistakes?—living in a lumber-room and furbishing up broken-legged theories about Chus and Mizraim?"

"How can you bear to speak so lightly?" said Dorothea, with a look between sorrow and anger. "If it were as you say, what could be sadder than so much ardent labour all in vain? I wonder it does not affect you more painfully, if you really think that a man like Mr. Casaubon, of so much goodness, power, and learning, should in any way fail in what has been the labour of his best years." She was beginning to be shocked that she had got to such a point of supposition, and indignant with Will for having led her to it.

"You questioned me about the matter of fact, not of feeling," said Will. "But if you wish to punish me for the fact, I submit. I am not in a position to express my feeling toward Mr. Casaubon: it would be at best a pensioner's eulogy."

"Pray excuse me," said Dorothea, colouring deeply. "I am aware, as you say, that I am in fault, in having introduced the subject. Indeed, I am wrong altogether. Failure after long perseverance is much grander than never to have a striving good enough to be called a failure."

"I quite agree with you," said Will, determined to change the situation—"so much so that I have made up my mind not to run that risk of never attaining a failure. Mr. Casaubon's generosity has perhaps been dangerous to me, and I mean to renounce the liberty it has given me. I mean to go back to England shortly and work my own way—depend on nobody else than myself."

"That is fine—I respect that feeling," said Dorothea, with returning kindness. "But Mr. Casaubon, I am sure, has never thought of anything in the matter except what was most for your welfare."

"She has obstinacy and pride enough to serve instead of love, now she has married him," said Will to himself. Aloud he said, rising,

"I shall not see you again."

"O stay till Mr. Casaubon comes," said Dorothea, earnestly. "I am so glad we met in Rome. I wanted to know you."

"And I have made you angry," said Will. "I have made you think ill of me."

"Oh no! My sister tells me I am always angry with people who do not say just what I like. But I hope I am not given to think ill of them. In the end I am usually obliged to think ill of myself, for being so impatient."

"Still, you don't like me; I have made myself an unpleasant thought to you."

"Not at all," said Dorothea, with the most open kindness. "I like you very much."

Will was not quite contented, thinking that he would apparently have been of more importance if he had been disliked. He said nothing, but looked dull, not to say sulky.

"And I am quite interested to see what you will do," Dorothea went on cheerfully. "I believe devoutly in a natural difference of vocation. If it were not for that belief, I suppose I should be very narrow—there are so many things, hesides painting, that I am quite ignorant of. You would bardly believe how little I have taken in of music and literature, which you know so much of. I wonder what your vocation will turn out to be: perhaps you will be a poet?"

"That depends. To be a poet is to have a soul so quick to discern, that no shade of quality escapes it, and so quick to feel, that discernment is but a hand playing with finely-ordered variety on the chords of emotion—a soul in which knowledge passes instantaneously into feeling, and feeling flashes back as a new organ of knowledge. One may have that condition by fits only."

"But you leave out the poems," said Dorothea. "I think they are wanted to complete the poet. I understand what you mean about knowledge passing into feeling, for that seems to be just what I experience. But I am sure I could never produce a poem."

"You *are* a poem—and that is to be the best part of a poet—what makes up the poet's consciousness in his best moods," said Will, showing such originality as we all share with the morning and the spring-time and other endless renewals.

"I am very glad to hear it," said Dorothea, laughing out her words in a birdlike modulation, and looking at Will with playful gratitude in her eyes. "What very kind things you say to me!"

"I wish I could ever do anything that would be what you call kind—that I could ever be of the slightest service to you. I fear I shall never have the opportunity." Will spoke with fervour.

"Oh yes!" said Dorothea, cordially. "It will come; and I shall remember how well you wish me. I quite hoped that we should be friends when I first saw you—because of your relationship to Mr. Casaubon." There was a certain liquid brightness in her eyes, and Will was conscious that his own were obeying a law of nature and filling too. The allusion to Mr. Casaubon would have spoiled all if anything at that moment could have spoiled the subduing power, the sweet dignity, of her noble unsuspicious inexperience.

"And there is one thing even now that you can do," said Dorothea, rising and walking a little way under the strength of a recurring impulse. "Promise me that you will not again, to any one, speak of that subject—I mean, about Mr. Casaubon's writings—I mean in that kind of way. It was I who led to it. It was my fault. But promise me."

She had returned from her brief pacing and stood opposite Will, looking gravely at him.

"Certainly, I will promise you," said Will, reddening however. If he never said a cutting word about Mr. Casaubon again and left off receiving favours from him, it would clearly be permissible to hate him the more. The poet must know how to hate, says Goethe; and Will was at least ready with that accomplishment. He said that he must go now without waiting for Mr. Casaubon, whom he would come to take leave of at the last moment. Dorothea gave him her hand, and they exchanged a simple "Good-bye."

But going out of the *porte cochère* he met Mr. Casaubon, and that gentleman, expressing the best wishes for his cousin, politely waived the pleasure of any further leave-taking on the morrow, which would be sufficiently crowded with the preparations for departure.

"I have something to tell you about our cousin, Mr. Ladislaw, which I think will heighten your opinion of him," said Dorothea to her husband in the course of the evening. She had mentioned immediately on his entering that Will had just gone away, and would come again, but Mr. Casaubon had said, "I met him outside, and we made our final adieux, I believe," saying this with the air and tone by which we imply that any subject, whether private or public, does not interest us enough to wish for a further remark upon it. So Dorothea had waited.

"What is that, my love?" said Mr. Casaubon (he always said "my love," when his manner was the coldest).

"He has made up his mind to leave off wandering at once, and to give up his dependence on your generosity. He means soon to go back to England, and work his own way. I thought you would consider that a good sign," said Dorothea, with an appealing look into her husband's neutral face.

"Did he mention the precise order of occupation to which he would addict himself?"

"No. But he said that he felt the danger which lay for him in your generosity. Of course he will write to you about it. Do you not think better of him for his resolve?"

"I shall await his communication on the subject," said Mr. Casaubon.

"I told him I was sure that the thing you considered in all you did for him was his own welfare. I remembered your goodness in what you said about him when I first saw him at Lowick," said Dorothea, putting her hand on her husband's.

"I had a duty towards him," said Mr. Casaubon, laying his other hand on Dorothea's in conscientious acceptance of her caress, but with a glance which he could not hinder from being uneasy. "The young man, I confess, is not otherwise an object of interest to me, nor need we, I think, discuss his future course, which it is not ours to determine beyond the limits which I have sufficiently indicated."

Dorothea did not mention Will again.

BOOK III

WAITING FOR DEATH

CHAPTER XXIII

> " Your horses of the Sun," he said,
> " And first-rate whip Apollo !
> Whate'er they be, I'll eat my head,
> But I will beat them hollow."

Fred Vincy, we have seen, had a debt on his mind, and though no such immaterial burthen could depress that buoyant-hearted young gentleman for many hours together, there were circumstances connected with this debt which made the thought of it unusually importunate. The creditor was Mr. Bambridge, a horse-dealer of the neighbourhood, whose company was much sought in Middlemarch by young men understood to be "addicted to pleasure." During the vacations Fred had naturally required more amusements than he had ready money for, and Mr. Bambridge had been accommodating enough not only to trust him for the hire of horses and the accidental expense of ruining a fine hunter, but also to make a small advance by which he might be able to meet some losses at billiards. The total debt was a hundred and sixty pounds. Bambridge was in no alarm about his money, being sure that young Vincy had backers ; but he had required something to show for it, and Fred had at first given a bill with his own signature. Three months later he had renewed this bill with the signature of Caleb Garth. On both occasions Fred had felt confident that he should meet the bill himself, having ample funds at disposal in his own hopefulness. You will hardly demand that his confidence should have a basis in external facts ; such confidence, we know, is something less coarse and materialistic : it is a comfortable disposition leading us to expect that the wisdom of providence or the folly of our friends, the mysteries of luck or the still greater mystery of our high individual value in the universe, will bring about agreeable issues, such as are consistent with our good taste in costume, and our general preference for the best style of thing. Fred felt sure that he should have a present from his uncle, that he should have a run of luck, that by dint of "swapping" he should gradually metamorphose a horse worth forty pounds into a horse that would fetch a hundred at any moment—"judgment" being always equivalent to an unspecified sum in hard cash. And in any case, even supposing negations which only a morbid distrust could imagine, Fred had always (at that time) his father's pocket as a last resource, so that his assets of hopefulness had a sort of gorgeous superfluity about them. Of what might be the capacity of his father's pocket, Fred had only a vague notion: was not trade elastic? And would not the deficiencies of one year be made up for by the surplus of another? The Vincys lived in an easy profuse way, not with any new ostentation, but according to the family habits and traditions, so that the children had no standard of economy, and the elder ones retained some of their infantine notion that their father might pay for anything if he would. Mr. Vincy himself had expensive Middlemarch habits—spent money on coursing, on his cellar, and on dinner-giving, while mamma had those running accounts with tradespeople, which give a cheerful sense of getting everything one wants without any question of payment. But it was in the nature of fathers, Fred knew, to bully one about expenses: there was always a little storm over his extravagance if he had to disclose a debt, and Fred disliked bad weather within doors. He was too filial to be disrespectful to his father, and he bore the thunder with the certainty that it was transient; but in the meantime it was disagreeable to see his mother cry, and also to be obliged to look sulky instead of having fun; for Fred was so good-tempered that if he looked glum under scolding, it was chiefly for propriety's sake. The easier course, plainly, was to renew the bill with a friend's signature. Why not? With the superfluous securities of hope at his command, there was no reason why he should not have increased other people's liabilities to any extent, but for the fact that men whose names were good for anything were usually pessimists, indisposed to believe that the universal order of things would necessarily be agreeable to an agreeable young gentleman.

With a favour to ask we review our list of friends, do justice to their more amiable qualities, forgive their little offences, and concerning each in turn, try to arrive at the conclusion that he will be eager to oblige us, our own eagerness to be obliged being as communicable as other warmth. Still there is always a certain number who are dismissed as but moderately eager until the others have refused; and it happened that Fred checked off all his friends but one, on the ground that applying to them would be disagreeable; being implicitly convinced that he at least (whatever might be maintained about mankind generally) had a right to be free from anything disagreeable. That he should ever fall into a thoroughly unpleasant position—wear trousers shrunk with washing, eat cold mutton, have to walk for want of a horse, or to "duck under" in any sort of way—was an absurdity irreconcilable with those cheerful intuitions implanted in him by nature. And Fred winced under the idea of being looked down upon as wanting funds for small debts. Thus it came to pass that the friend whom he chose to apply to was at once the poorest and the kindest—namely, Caleb Garth.

The Garths were very fond of Fred, as he was of them; for when he and Rosamond were little ones, and the Garths were better off, the slight connection between the two families through Mr. Featherstone's double marriage (the first to Mr. Garth's sister, and the second to Mrs. Vincy's) had led to an acquaintance which was carried on between the children rather than the parents: the children drank tea together out of their toy tea-cups, and spent whole days together in play. Mary was a little hoyden, and Fred at six years old thought her the nicest girl in the world, making her his wife with a brass ring which he had cut from an umbrella. Through all the stages of his education he had kept his affection for the Garths, and his habit of going to their house as a second home, though any intercourse between them and the elders of his family had long ceased. Even when Caleb Garth was prosperous, the Vincys were on condescending terms with him and his wife, for there were nice distinctions of rank in Middlemarch; and though old manufacturers could not any more than dukes be connected with none but equals, they were conscious of an inherent social superiority which was defined with great nicety in practice, though hardly expressible theoretically. Since then Mr. Garth had failed in the building business, which he had unfortunately added to his other avocations of surveyor, valuer, and agent, had conducted that business for a time entirely for the benefit of his assignees, and had been living narrowly, exerting himself to the utmost that he might after all pay twenty shillings in the pound. He had now achieved this, and from all who did not think it a bad precedent, his honourable exertions had won him due esteem; but in no part of the world is genteel visiting founded on esteem, in the absence of suitable furniture and complete dinner-service. Mrs. Vincy had never been at her ease with Mrs. Garth, and frequently spoke of her as a woman who had had to work for her bread—meaning that Mrs. Garth had been a teacher before her marriage; in which case an intimacy with Lindley Murray and Mangnall's Questions was something like a draper's discrimination of calico trade-marks, or a courier's acquaintance with foreign countries: no woman who was better off needed that sort of thing. And since Mary had been keeping Mr. Featherstone's house, Mrs. Vincy's want of liking for the Garths had been converted into something more positive, by alarm lest Fred should engage himself to this plain girl, whose parents "lived in such a small way." Fred, being aware of this, never spoke at home of his visits to Mrs. Garth, which had of late become more frequent, the increasing ardour of his affection for Mary inclining him the more towards whose who belonged to her.

Mr. Garth had a small office in the town, and to this Fred went with his request. He obtained it without much difficulty, for a large amount of painful experience had not sufficed to make Caleb Garth cautious about his own affairs, or distrustful of his fellow-men when they had not proved themselves untrustworthy; and he had the highest opinion of Fred, was "sure the lad would turn out well—an open affectionate fellow, with a good bottom to his character—you might trust him for anything." Such was Caleb's psychological argument. He was one of those rare men who are rigid to themselves and indulgent to others. He had a certain shame about his neighbours' errors, and never spoke of them willingly; hence he was not likely to divert his mind from the best mode of hardening timber and other ingenious devices in order to preconceive those errors. If he had to blame any one, it was necessary for him to move all the papers within his reach, or describe various diagrams with his stick, or make calculations with the odd money in his pocket, before he could begin; and he would rather do other men's work than find fault with their doing. I fear he was a bad disciplinarian.

When Fred stated the circumstances of his debt, his wish to meet it without troubling his father. and the certainty that the money would be forthcoming so as to cause no one any inconvenience, Caleb pushed his spectacles upward, listened, looked into his favourite's clear young eyes, and believed him, not distinguishing confidence about the future from veracity about the past; but he felt that it was an occasion for a friendly hint as to conduct, and that before giving his signature he must give a rather strong admonition. Accordingly, he took the paper and lowered his spectacles, measured the space at his command, reached his pen and examined it, dipped it in the ink and examined it again, then pushed the paper a little way from him, lifted up his spectacles again, showed a deepened depression in the outer angle of his bushy eyebrows, which gave his face a peculiar mildness (pardon these details for once—you would have learned to love them if you had known Caleb Garth), and said in a comfortable tone,

"It was a misfortune, eh, that breaking the horse's knees? And then, these exchanges, they don't answer when you have 'cute jockeys to deal with. You'll be wiser another time, my boy."

Whereupon Caleb drew down his spectacles, and proceeded to write his signature with the care which he always gave to that performance; for whatever he did in the way of business he did well. He contemplated the large well-proportioned letters and final flourish, with his head a trifle on one side for an instant, then handed it to Fred, said "Good-bye," and returned forthwith to his absorption in a plan for Sir James Chettam's new farm-buildings.

Either because his interest in this work thrust the incident of the signature from his memory, or for some reason of which Caleb was more conscious, Mrs. Garth remained ignorant of the affair.

Since it occurred, a change had come over Fred's sky, which altered his view of the distance, and was the reason why his uncle Featherstone's present of money was of importance enough to make his colour come and go, first with a too definite expectation, and afterwards with a proportionate disappointment. His failure in passing his examination had made his accumulation of college debts the more unpardonable by his father, and there had been an unprecedented storm at home. Mr. Vincy had sworn that if he had anything more of that sort to put up with, Fred should turn out and get his living how he could; and he had never yet quite recovered his good-humoured tone to his son, who had especially enraged him by saying at this stage of things that he did not want to be a clergyman, and would rather not "go on with that." Fred was conscious that he would have been yet more severely dealt with if his family as well as himself had not secretly regarded him as Mr.

Featherstone's heir; that old gentleman's pride in him, and apparent fondness for him, serving in the stead of more exemplary conduct—just as when a youthful nobleman steals jewellery we call the act kleptomania, speak of it with a philosophical smile, and never think of his being sent to the house of correction as if he were a ragged boy who had stolen turnips. In fact, tacit expectations of what would be done for him by Uncle Featherstone determined the angle at which most people viewed Fred Vincy in Middlemarch; and in his own consciousness, what Uncle Featherstone would do for him in an emergency or what he would do simply as an incorporated luck, formed always an immeasurable depth of aerial perspective. But that present of banknotes, once made, was measurable, and being applied to the amount of the debt, showed a deficit which had still to be filled up either by Fred's "judgment" or by luck in some other shape. For that little episode of the alleged borrowing, in which he had made his father the agent in getting the Bulstrode certificate, was a new reason against going to his father for money towards meeting his actual debt. Fred was keen enough to foresee that anger would confuse distinctions, and that his denial of having borrowed expressly on the strength of his uncle's will would be taken as a falsehood. He had gone to his father and told him one vexatious affair, and he had left another untold: in such cases the complete revelation always produces the impression of a previous duplicity. Now Fred piqued himself on keeping clear of lies, and even fibs; he often shrugged his shoulders and made a significant grimace at what he called Rosamond's fibs (it is only brothers who can associate such ideas with a lovely girl); and rather than incur the accusation of falsehood he would even incur some trouble and self-restraint. It was under strong inward pressure of this kind that Fred had taken the wise step of depositing the eighty pounds with his mother. It was a pity that he had not at once given them to Mr. Garth; but he meant to make the sum complete with another sixty, and with a view to this, he had kept twenty pounds in his own pocket as a sort of seed-corn, which, planted by judgment, and watered by luck, might yield more than threefold—a very poor rate of multiplication when the field is a young gentleman's infinite soul, with all the numerals at command.

Fred was not a gambler: he had not that specific disease in which the suspension of the whole nervous energy on a chance or risk becomes as necessary as the dram to the drunkard; he had only the tendency to that diffusive form of gambling which has no alcoholic intensity, but is carried on with the healthiest chyle-fed blood, keeping up a joyous imaginative activity which fashions events according to desire, and having no fears about its own weather, only sees the advantage there must be to others in going aboard with it. Hopefulness has a pleasure in making a throw of any kind, because the prospect of success is certain; and only a more generous pleasure in offering as many as possible a share in the stake. Fred liked play, especially billiards, as he liked hunting or riding a steeplechase; and he only liked it the better because he wanted money and hoped to win. But the twenty pounds' worth of seed-corn had been planted in vain in the seductive green plot—all of it at least which had not been dispersed by the roadside—and Fred found himself close upon the term of payment with no money at command beyond the eighty pounds which he had deposited with his mother. The broken-winded horse which he rode represented a present which had been made to him a long while ago by his uncle Featherstone: his father always allowed him to keep a horse, Mr. Vincy's own habits making him regard this as a reasonable demand even for a son who was rather exasperating. This horse, then, was Fred's property, and in his anxiety to meet the imminent bill he determined to sacrifice a possession without which life would certainly be worth little. He made the resolution with a sense of heroism—heroism forced on him by the dread of breaking his word to Mr. Garth, by his love for Mary and awe of her opinion. He would start for Houndsley horse-fair which was to be held the next morning, and—simply sell his horse, bringing back the money by coach?—Well, the horse would hardly fetch more than thirty pounds, and there was no knowing what might happen: it would be folly to balk himself of luck beforehand. It was a hundred to one that some good chance would fall in his way: the longer he thought of it, the less possible it seemed that he should not have a good chance, and the less reasonable that he should not equip himself with the powder and shot for bringing it down. He would ride to Houndsley with Bambridge and with Horrock "the vet," and without asking them anything expressly, he should virtually get the benefit of their opinion. Before he set out, Fred got the eighty pounds from his mother.

Most of those who saw Fred riding out of Middlemarch in company with Bambridge and Horrock, on his way of course to Houndsley horse-fair, thought that young Vincy was pleasure-seeking as usual; and but for an unwonted consciousness of grave matters on hand, he himself would have had a sense of dissipation, and of doing what might be expected of a gay young fellow. Considering that Fred was not at all coarse, that he rather looked down on the manners and speech of young men who had not been to the university, and that he had written stanzas as pastoral and unvoluptuous as his flute-playing, his attraction towards Bambridge and Horrock was an interesting fact which even the love of horse-flesh would not wholly account for without that mysterious influence of Naming which determinates so much of mortal choice. Under any other name than "pleasure" the society of Messieurs Bambridge and Horrock must certainly have been regarded as monotonous; and to arrive with them at Houndsley on a drizzling afternoon, to get down at the Red Lion in a street shaded with coal-dust, and dine in a room furnished with a dirt-enamelled map of the county, a bad portrait of an anonymous horse in a stable, His Majesty George the Fourth with legs and cravat, and various leaden spittoons, might have seemed a hard business, but for the sustaining power of nomenclature which determined that the pursuit of these things was "gay."

In Mr. Horrock there was certainly an apparent unfathomableness which offered play to the imagination. Costume, at a glance, gave him a thrilling association with horses (enough to specify the hat-brim, which took the slightest upward angle just to escape the suspicion of bending downwards), and nature had given him a face which by dint of Mongolian eyes, and a nose, mouth, and chin, seeming to follow his hat-brim in a moderate inclination upwards, gave the effect of a subdued unchangeable sceptical smile, of all expressions the most tyrannous over a susceptible mind, and, when accompanied by adequate silence, likely to create the reputation of an invincible understanding, an infinite fund of humour—too dry to flow, and probably in a state of immovable crust,—and a critical judgment which, if you could ever be fortunate enough to know it, would be *the* thing and no other. It is a physiognomy seen in all vocations, but perhaps it has never been more powerful over the youth of England than in a judge of horses.

Mr. Horrock, at a question from Fred about his horse's fetlock, turned sideways in his saddle, and watched the horse's action for the space of three minutes, then turned forward, twitched his own bridle, and remained silent with a profile neither more nor less sceptical than it had been.

The part thus played in dialogue by Mr. Horrock was terribly effective. A mixture of passions was excited in Fred—a mad desire to thrash Horrock's opinion into utterance, restrained by anxiety to retain the advantage of his friendship. There was always the chance that Horrock might say something quite invaluable at the right moment.

Mr. Bambridge had more open manners, and appeared to give forth his ideas without economy. He was loud, robust, and was sometimes spoken of as being "given to indulgence"—chiefly in swearing, drinking, and beating his wife. Some people who had lost by him called him a vicious man; but he regarded horse-dealing as the finest of the arts, and might have argued plausibly that it had nothing to do with morality. He was undeniably a prosperous man, bore his drinking better than others bore their moderation, and, on the whole, flourished like the green bay-tree. But his range of conversation was limited, and like the fine old tune, "Drops of brandy," gave you after a while a sense of returning upon itself in a way that might make weak heads dizzy. But a slight infusion of Mr. Bambridge was felt to give tone and character to several circles in Middlemarch; and he was a distinguished figure in the bar and billiard-room at the Green Dragon. He knew some anecdotes about the heroes of the turf, and various clever tricks of Marquesses and Viscounts which seemed to prove that blood asserted its pre-eminence even among blacklegs; but the minute retentiveness of his memory was chiefly shown about the horses he had himself bought and sold; the number of miles they would trot you in no time without turning a hair being, after the lapse of years, still a subject of passionate asseveration, in which he would assist the imagination of his hearers by solemnly swearing that they never saw anything like it. In short, Mr. Bambridge was a man of pleasure and a gay companion.

Fred was subtle, and did not tell his friends that he was going to Houndsley bent on selling his horse: he wished to get indirectly at their genuine opinion of its value, not being aware that a genuine opinion was the last thing likely to be extracted from such eminent critics. It was not Mr. Bambridge's weakness to be a gratuitous flatterer. He had never before been so much struck with the fact that this unfortunate bay was a roarer to a degree which required the roundest word for perdition to give you any idea of it.

"You made a bad hand at swapping when you went to anybody but me, Vincy! Why, you never threw your leg across a finer horse than that chestnut, and you gave him for this brute. If you set him cantering, he goes on like twenty sawyers. I never heard but one worse roarer in my life, and that was a roan: it belonged to Pegwell, the corn-factor; he used to drive him in his gig seven years ago, and he wanted me to take him, but I said, 'Thank you, Peg, I don't deal in wind-instruments.' That was what I said. It went the round of the country, that joke did. But, what the hell! the horse was a penny trumpet to that roarer of yours."

"Why, you said just now his was worse than mine," said Fred, more irritable than usual.

"I said a lie, then," said Mr. Bambridge, emphatically. "There wasn't a penny to choose between 'em."

Fred spurred his horse, and they trotted on a little way. When they slackened again, Mr. Bambridge said—

"Not but what the roan was a better trotter than yours."

"I'm quite satisfied with his paces, I know," said Fred, who required all the consciousness of being in gay company to support him; "I say, his trot is an uncommonly clean one, eh, Horrock?"

Mr. Horrock looked before him with as complete a neutrality as if he had been a portrait by a great master.

Fred gave up the fallacious hope of getting a genuine opinion; but on reflection he saw that Bambridge's depreciation and Horrock's silence were both virtually encouraging, and indicated that they thought better of the horse than they chose to say.

That very evening, indeed, before the fair had set in, Fred thought he saw a favourable opening for disposing advantageously of his horse, but an opening which made him congratulate himself on his foresight in bringing with him his eighty pounds. A young farmer, acquainted with Mr. Bambridge, came into the Red Lion, and entered into conversation about parting with a hunter, which he introduced at once as Diamond, implying that it was a public character. For himself he only wanted a useful hack, which would draw upon occasion; being about to marry and to give up hunting. The hunter was in a friend's stable at some little distance; there was still time for gentlemen to see it before dark. The friend's stable had to be reached through a back street where you might as easily have been poisoned without expense of drugs as in any grim street of that unsanitary period. Fred was not fortified against disgust by brandy, as his companions were, but the hope of having at last seen the horse that would enable him to make money was exhilarating enough to lead him over the same ground again the first thing in the morning. He felt sure that if he did not come to a bargain with the farmer, Bambridge would; for the stress of circumstances, Fred felt, was sharpening his acuteness and endowing him with all the constructive power of suspicion. Bambridge had run down Diamond in a way that he never would have done (the horse being a friend's) if he had not thought of buying it; every one who looked at the animal—even Horrock—was evidently impressed with its merit. To get all the advantage of being with men of this sort, you must know how to draw your inferences, and not be a spoon who takes things literally. The colour of the horse was a dappled grey, and Fred happened to know that Lord Medlicote's man was on the look-out for just such a horse. After all his running down, Bambridge let it out in the course of the evening, when the farmer was absent, that he had seen worse horses go for eighty pounds. Of course he contradicted himself twenty times over, but when you know what is likely to be true you can test a man's admissions. And Fred could not but reckon his own judgment of a horse as worth something. The farmer had paused over Fred's respectable though broken-winded steed long enough to show that he thought it worth consideration, and it seemed probable that he would take it, with five-and-twenty pounds in addition, as the equivalent of Diamond. In that case Fred, when he had parted with his new horse for at least eighty pounds, would be fifty-five pounds in pocket by the transaction, and would have a hundred and thirty-five pounds towards meeting the bill; so that the deficit temporarily thrown on Mr. Garth would at the utmost be twenty-five pounds. By the time he was hurrying on his clothes in the morning, he saw so clearly the importance of not losing this rare chance, that if Bambridge and Horrock had both dissuaded him, he would not have been deluded into a direct interpretation of their purpose: he would have been aware that those deep hands held something else than a young fellow's interest. With regard to horses, distrust was your only clue. But scepticism, as we know, can never be thoroughly applied, else life would come to a standstill: something we must believe in and do, and whatever that something may be called, it is virtually our own judgment, even when it seems like the most slavish reliance on another. Fred believed in the excellence of his bargain, and even before the fair had well set in, had got possession of the dappled grey, at the price of his old horse and thirty pounds in addition—only five pounds more than he had expected to give.

But he felt a little worried and wearied, perhaps with mental debate, and without waiting for the further gaieties of the horse-fair, he set out alone on his fourteen miles' journey, meaning to take it very quietly and keep his horse fresh.

CHAPTER XXIV

> " The offender's sorrow brings but small relief
> " To him who wears the strong offence's cross."
>
> —Shakespeare : *Sonnets.*

I am sorry to say that only the third day after the propitious events at Houndsley Fred Vincy had fallen into worse spirits than he had known in his life before. Not that he had been disappointed as to the possible market for his horse, but that before the bargain could be concluded with Lord Medlicote's man, this Diamond, in which hope to the amount of eighty pounds had been invested, had without the slightest warning exhibited in the stable a most vicious energy in kicking, had just missed killing the groom, and had ended in laming himself severely by catching his leg in a rope that overhung the stable-board. There was no more redress for this than for the discovery of bad temper after marriage—which of course old companions were aware of before the ceremony. For some reason or other, Fred had none of his usual elasticity under this stroke of ill-fortune : he was simply aware that he had only fifty pounds, that there was no chance of his getting any more at present, and that the bill for a hundred and sixty would be presented in five days. Even if he had applied to his father on the plea that Mr. Garth should be saved from loss, Fred felt smartingly that his father would angrily refuse to rescue Mr. Garth from the consequence of what he would call encouraging extravagance and deceit. He was so utterly downcast that he could frame no other project than to go straight to Mr. Garth and tell him the sad truth, carrying with him the fifty pounds, and getting that sum at least safely out of his own hands. His father, being at the warehouse, did not yet know of the accident : when he did, he would storm about the vicious brute being brought into his stable ; and before meeting that lesser annoyance Fred wanted to get away with all his courage to face the greater. He took his father's nag, for he had made up his mind that when he had told Mr. Garth, he would ride to Stone Court and confess all to Mary. In fact, it is probable that but for Mary's existence and Fred's love for her, his conscience would have been much less active both in previously urging the debt on his thought and in impelling him not to spare himself after his usual fashion by deferring an unpleasant task, but to act as directly and simply as he could. Even much stronger mortals than Fred Vincy hold half their rectitude in the mind of the being they love best. "The theatre of all my actions is fallen," said an antique personage when his chief friend was dead; and they are fortunate who get a theatre where the audience demands their best. Certainly it would have made a considerable difference to Fred at that time if Mary Garth had had no decided notions as to what was admirable in character.

Mr. Garth was not at the office, and Fred rode on to his house, which was a little way outside the town—a homely place with an orchard in front of it, a rambling, old-fashioned, half-timbered building, which before the town had spread had been a farmhouse, but was now surrounded with the private gardens of the townsmen. We get the fonder of our houses if they have a physiognomy of their own, as our friends have. The Garth family, which was rather a large one, for Mary had four brothers and one sister, were very fond of their old house, from which all the best furniture had long been sold. Fred liked it too, knowing it by heart even to the attic which smelt deliciously of apples and quinces, and until to-day he had never come to it without pleasant expectations; but his heart beat uneasily now with the sense that he should probably have to make his confession before Mrs. Garth, of whom he was rather more in awe than of her husband. Not that she was inclined to sarcasm and to impulsive sallies, as Mary was. In her present matronly age at least, Mrs. Garth never committed herself by over-hasty speech; having, as she said, borne the yoke in her youth, and learned self-control. She had that rare sense which discerns what is unalterable, and submits to it without murmuring. Adoring her husband's virtues, she had very early made up her mind to his incapacity of minding his own interests, and had met the consequences cheerfully. She had been magnanimous enough to renounce all pride in teapots or children's frilling, and had never poured any pathetic confidences into the ears of her feminine neighbours concerning Mr. Garth's want of prudence and the sums he might have had if he had been like other men. Hence these fair neighbours thought her either proud or eccentric, and sometimes spoke of her to their husbands as "your fine Mrs. Garth." She was not without her criticism of them in return, being more accurately instructed than most matrons in Middlemarch, and—where is the blameless woman? —apt to be a little severe towards her own sex, which in her opinion was framed to be entirely subordinate. On the other hand, she was disproportionately indulgent towards the failings of men, and was often heard to say that these were natural. Also, it must be admitted that Mrs. Garth was a trifle too emphatic in her resistance to what she held to be follies: the passage from governess into housewife had wrought itself a little too strongly into her consciousness, and she rarely forgot that while her grammar and accent were above the town standard, she wore a plain cap, cooked the family dinner, and darned all the stockings. She had sometimes taken pupils in a peripatetic fashion, making them follow her about in the kitchen with their book or slate. She thought it good for them to see that she could make an excellent lather while she corrected their blunders "without looking,"—that a woman with her sleeves tucked up above her elbows might know all about the Subjunctive Mood or the Torrid Zone—that, in short, she might possess "education" and other good things ending in "tion," and worthy to be pronounced emphatically, without being a useless doll. When she made remarks to this edifying effect, she had a firm little frown on her brow, which yet did not hinder her face from looking benevolent, and her words which came forth like a procession were uttered in a fervid agreeable contralto. Certainly, the exemplary Mrs. Garth had her droll aspects, but her character sustained her oddities, as a very fine wine sustains a flavour of skin.

Towards Fred Vincy she had a motherly feeling, and had always been disposed to excuse his errors, though she would probably not have excused Mary for engaging herself to him, her daughter being included in that more rigorous judgment which she applied to her own sex. But this very fact of her exceptional indulgence towards him made it the harder to Fred that he must now inevitably sink in her opinion. And the circumstances of his visit turned out to be still more unpleasant than he had expected; for Caleb Garth had gone out early to look at some repairs not far off. Mrs. Garth at certain hours was always in the kitchen, and this morning she was carrying on several occupations at once there—making her pies at the well-scoured deal table on one side of that airy room, observing

Sally's movements at the oven and dough-tub through an open door, and giving lessons to her youngest boy and girl, who were standing opposite to her at the table with their books and slates before them. A tub and a clothes-horse at the other end of the kitchen indicated an intermittent wash of small things also going on.

Mrs. Garth, with her sleeves turned above her elbows, deftly handling her pastry—applying her rolling-pin and giving ornamental pinches, while she expounded with grammatical fervour what were the right views about the concord of verbs and pronouns with "nouns of multitude or signifying many," was a sight agreeably amusing. She was of the same curly-haired, square-faced type as Mary, but handsomer, with more delicacy of feature, a pale skin, a solid matronly figure, and a remarkable firmness of glance. In her snowy-frilled cap she reminded one of that delightful Frenchwoman whom we have all seen marketing, basket on arm. Looking at the mother, you might hope that the daughter would become like her, which is a prospective advantage equal to a dowry—the mother too often standing behind the daughter like a malignant prophecy—"Such as I am, she will shortly be."

"Now let us go through that once more," said Mrs. Garth, pinching an apple-puff which seemed to distract Ben, an energetic young male with a heavy brow, from due attention to the lesson. "'Not without regard to the import of the word as conveying unity or plurality of idea'—tell me again what that means, Ben."

(Mrs. Garth, like more celebrated educators, had her favourite ancient paths, and in a general wreck of society would have tried to hold her 'Lindley Murray' above the waves.)

"Oh—it means—you must think what you mean," said Ben, rather peevishly. "I hate grammar. What's the use of it?"

"To teach you to speak and write correctly, so that you can be understood," said Mrs. Garth, with severe precision. "Should you like to speak as old Job does?"

"Yes," said Ben, stoutly; "it's funnier. He says, 'Yo goo'—that's just as good as 'You go.'"

"But he says, 'A ship's in the garden,' instead of 'a sheep,'" said Letty, with an air of superiority. "You might think he meant a ship off the sea."

"No, you mightn't, if you weren't silly," said Ben. "How could a ship off the sea come there?"

"These things belong only to pronunciation, which is the least part of grammar," said Mrs. Garth. "That apple-peel is to be eaten by the pigs, Ben; if you eat it, I must give them your piece of pastry. Job has only to speak about very plain things. How do you think you would write or speak about anything more difficult, if you knew no more of grammar than he does? You would use wrong words, and put words in the wrong places, and instead of making people understand you, they would turn away from you as a tiresome person. What would you do then?"

"I shouldn't care, I should leave off," said Ben, with a sense that this was an agreeable issue where grammar was concerned.

"I see you are getting tired and stupid, Ben," said Mrs. Garth, accustomed to these obstructive arguments from her male offspring. Having finished her pies, she moved towards the clothes-horse, and said, "Come here and tell me the story I told you on Wednesday, about Cincinnatus."

"I know! he was a farmer," said Ben.

"Now, Ben, he was a Roman—let *me* tell," said Letty, using her elbow contentiously.

"You silly thing, he was a Roman farmer, and he was ploughing."

"Yes, but before that—that didn't come first—people wanted him," said Letty.

"Well, but you must say what sort of a man he was first," insisted Ben. "He was a wise man, like my father, and that made the people want his advice. And he was a brave man, and could fight. And so could my father—couldn't he, mother?"

"Now, Ben, let me tell the story straight on, as mother told it us," said Letty, frowning. "Please, mother, tell Ben not to speak."

"Letty, I am ashamed of you," said her mother, wringing out the caps from the tub. "When your brother began, you ought to have waited to see if he could not tell the story. How rude you look, pushing and frowning, as if you wanted to conquer with your elbows! Cincinnatus, I am sure, would have been sorry to see his daughter behave so." (Mrs. Garth delivered this awful sentence with much majesty of enunciation, and Letty felt that between repressed volubility and general disesteem, that of the Romans inclusive, life was already a painful affair.) "Now, Ben."

"Well—oh—well—why, there was a great deal of fighting, and they were all blockheads, and—I can't tell it just how you told it—but they wanted a man to be captain and king and everything——"

"Dictator, now," said Letty, with injured looks, and not without a wish to make her mother repent.

"Very well, dictator!" said Ben, contemptuously. "But that isn't a good word: he didn't tell them to write on slates."

"Come, come, Ben, you are not so ignorant as that," said Mrs. Garth, carefully serious. "Hark, there is a knock at the door! Run, Letty, and open it."

The knock was Fred's; and when Letty said that her father was not in yet, but that her mother was in the kitchen, Fred had no alternative. He could not depart from his usual practice of going to see Mrs. Garth in the kitchen if she happened to be at work there. He put his arm round Letty's neck silently, and led her into the kitchen without his usual jokes and caresses.

Mrs. Garth was surprised to see Fred at this hour, but surprise was not a feeling that she was given to express, and she only said, quietly continuing her work—

"You, Fred, so early in the day? You look quite pale. Has anything happened?"

"I want to speak to Mr. Garth," said Fred, not yet ready to say more—"and to you also," he added, after a little pause, for he had no doubt that Mrs. Garth knew everything about the bill, and he must in the end speak of it before her, if not to her solely.

"Caleb will be in again in a few minutes," said Mrs. Garth, who imagined some trouble between Fred and his father. "He is sure not to be long, because he has some work at his desk that must be done this morning. Do you mind staying with me, while I finish my matters here?"

"But we needn't go on about Cincinnatus, need we?" said Ben, who had taken Fred's whip out of his hand, and was trying its efficiency on the cat.

"No, go out now. But put that whip down. How very mean of you to whip poor old Tortoise! Pray take the whip from him, Fred."

"Come, old boy, give it me," said Fred, putting out his hand.

"Will you let me ride on your horse to-day?" said Ben, rendering up the whip, with an air of not being obliged to do it.

"Not to-day—another time. I am not riding my own horse."

"Shall you see Mary to-day?"

"Yes, I think so," said Fred, with an unpleasant twinge.

"Tell her to come home soon, and play at forfeits, and make fun."

"Enough, enough, Ben! run away," said Mrs. Garth, seeing that Fred was teased.

"Are Letty and Ben your only pupils now, Mrs. Garth?" said Fred, when the children were gone and it was needful to say something that would pass the time. He was not yet sure whether he should wait for Mr. Garth, or use any good opportunity in conversation to confess to Mrs. Garth herself, give her the money and ride away.

"One—only one. Fanny Hackbutt comes at half-past eleven. I am not getting a great income now," said Mrs. Garth, smiling. "I am at a low ebb with pupils. But I have saved my little purse for Alfred's premium: I have ninety-two pounds. He can go to Mr. Hanmer's now; he is just at the right age."

This did not lead well towards the news that Mr. Garth was on the brink of losing ninety-two pounds and more. Fred was silent. "Young gentlemen who go to college are rather more costly than that," Mrs. Garth innocently continued, pulling out the edging on a cap-border. "And Caleb thinks that Alfred will turn out a distinguished engineer: he wants to give the boy a good chance. There he is! I hear him coming in. We will go to him in the parlour, shall we?"

When they entered the parlour Caleb had thrown down his hat and was seated at his desk.

"What, Fred, my boy?" he said in a tone of mild surprise, holding his pen still undipped. "You are here betimes." But missing the usual expression of cheerful greeting in Fred's face, he immediately added, "Is there anything up at home?—anything the matter?"

"Yes, Mr. Garth, I am come to tell something that I am afraid will give you a bad opinion of me. I am come to tell you and Mrs. Garth that I can't keep my word. I can't find the money to meet the bill after all. I have been unfortunate; I have only got these fifty pounds towards the hundred and sixty."

While Fred was speaking, he had taken out the notes and laid them on the desk before Mr. Garth. He had burst forth at once with the plain fact, feeling boyishly miserable and without verbal resources. Mrs. Garth was mutely astonished, and looked at her husband for an explanation. Caleb blushed, and after a little pause said—

"Oh, I didn't tell you, Susan: I put my name to a bill for

Fred; it was for a hundred and sixty pounds. He made sure he could meet it himself."

There was an evident change in Mrs. Garth's face, but it was like a change below the surface of water which remains smooth. She fixed her eyes on Fred, saying—

"I suppose you have asked your father for the rest of the money and he has refused you."

"No," said Fred, biting his lip, and speaking with more difficulty; "but I know it will be of no use to ask him; and unless it were of use, I should not like to mention Mr. Garth's name in the matter."

"It has come at an unfortunate time," said Caleb, in his hesitating way, looking down at the notes and nervously fingering the paper, "Christmas upon us—I'm rather hard up just now. You see, I have to cut out everything like a tailor with short measure. What can we do, Susan? I shall want every farthing we have in the bank. It's a hundred and ten pounds, the deuce take it!"

"I must give you the ninety-two pounds that I have put by for Alfred's premium," said Mrs. Garth, gravely and decisively, though a nice ear might have discerned a slight tremor in some of the words. "And I have no doubt that Mary has twenty pounds saved from her salary by this time. She will advance it."

Mrs. Garth had not again looked at Fred, and was not in the least calculating what words she should use to cut him the most effectively. Like the eccentric woman she was, she was at present absorbed in considering what was to be done, and did not fancy that the end could be better achieved by bitter remarks or explosions. But she had made Fred feel for the first time something like the tooth of remorse. Curiously enough, his pain in the affair beforehand had consisted almost entirely in the sense that he must seem dishonourable, and sink in the opinion of the Garths: he had not occupied himself with the inconvenience and possible injury that his breach might occasion them, for this exercise of the imagination on other people's needs is not common with hopeful young gentlemen. Indeed we are most of us brought up in the notion that the highest motive for not doing a wrong is something irrespective of the beings who would suffer the wrong. But at this moment he suddenly saw himself as a pitiful rascal who was robbing two women of their savings.

"I shall certainly pay it all, Mrs. Garth—ultimately," he stammered out.

"Yes, ultimately," said Mrs. Garth, who having a special dislike to fine words on ugly occasions, could not now repress an epigram. "But boys cannot well be apprenticed ultimately: they should be apprenticed at fifteen." She had never been so little inclined to make excuses for Fred.

"I was the most in the wrong, Susan," said Caleb. "Fred made sure of finding the money. But I'd no business to be fingering bills. I suppose you have looked all round and tried all honest means?" he added, fixing his merciful grey eyes on Fred. Caleb was too delicate to specify Mr. Featherstone.

"Yes, I have tried everything—I really have. I should have had a hundred and thirty pounds ready but for a misfortune with a horse which I was about to sell. My uncle had given me eighty pounds, and I paid away thirty with my old horse in order to get another which I was going to sell for eighty or more—I meant to go without a horse—but now it has turned out vicious and lamed itself. I wish I and the horses too had been at the devil, before I had brought this on you. There's no one else I care so much for: you and Mrs. Garth have always been so kind to me. However, it's no use saying that. You will always think me a rascal now."

Fred turned round and hurried out of the room, conscious that he was getting rather womanish, and feeling confusedly that his being sorry was not of much use to the Garths. They could see him mount, and quickly pass through the gate.

"I am disappointed in Fred Vincy," said Mrs. Garth. "I would not have believed beforehand that he would have drawn you into his debts. I knew he was extravagant, but I did not think that he would be so mean as to hang his risks on his oldest friend, who could the least afford to lose."

"I was a fool, Susan."

"That you were," said the wife, nodding and smiling. "But I should not have gone to publish it in the market-place. Why should you keep such things from me? It is just so with your buttons; you let them burst off without telling me, and go out with your wristband hanging. If I had only known I might have been ready with some better plan."

"You are sadly cut up, I know, Susan," said Caleb, looking feelingly at her. "I can't abide your losing the money you've scraped together for Alfred."

"It is very well that I *had* scraped it together; and it is you who will have to suffer, for you must teach the boy yourself. You must give up your bad habits. Some men take to drinking, and you have taken to working without pay. You must indulge yourself a little less in that. And you must ride over to Mary, and ask the child what money she has."

Caleb had pushed his chair back, and was leaning forward, shaking his head slowly, and fitting his finger-tips together with much nicety.

"Poor Mary!" he said. "Susan," he went on in a lowered tone, "I'm afraid she may be fond of Fred."

"Oh no! She always laughs at him; and he is not likely to think of her in any other than a brotherly way."

Caleb made no rejoinder, but presently lowered his spectacles, drew up his chair to the desk, and said, "Deuce take the bill—I wish it was at Hanover! These things are a sad interruption to business!"

The first part of this speech comprised his whole store of maledictory expression, and was uttered with a slight snarl easy to imagine. But it would be difficult to convey to those who never heard him utter the word "business," the peculiar tone of fervid veneration, of religious regard, in which he wrapped it, as a consecrated symbol is wrapped in its gold-fringed linen.

Caleb Garth often shook his head in meditation on the value, the indispensable might of that myriad-headed, myriad-handed labour by which the social body is fed, clothed, and housed. It had laid hold of his imagination in boyhood. The echoes of the great hammer where roof or keel were a-making, the signal-shouts of the workmen, the roar of the furnace, the thunder and plash of the engine, were a sublime music to him; the felling and lading of timber, and the huge trunk vibrating star-like in the distance along the highway, the crane at work on the wharf, the piled-up produce in warehouses, the precision and variety of muscular effort wherever exact work had to be turned out,—all these sights of his youth had acted on him as poetry without the aid of the poets, had made a philosophy for him without the aid of philosophers, a religion without the aid of theology. His early ambition had been to have as effective a share as possible in this sublime labour, which was peculiarly dignified by him with the name of "business;" and though he had only been a short time under a surveyor, and had been chiefly his own teacher, he knew more of land, building, and mining than most of the special men in the county.

His classification of human employments was rather crude, and, like the categories of more celebrated men, would not be acceptable in these advanced times. He divided them into "business, politics, preaching, learning, and amusement." He had nothing to say against the last four; but he regarded them as a reverential pagan regarded other gods than his own. In the same way, he thought very well of all ranks, but he would not himself have liked to be of any rank in which he had not such close contact with "business" as to get often honourably decorated with marks of dust and mortar, the damp of the engine, or the sweet soil of the woods and fields. Though he had never regarded himself as other than an orthodox Christian, and would argue on prevenient grace if the subject were proposed to him, I think his virtual divinities were good practical schemes, accurate work, and the faithful completion of undertakings: his prince of darkness was a slack workman. But there was no spirit of denial in Caleb, and the world seemed so wondrous to him that he was ready to accept any number of systems, like any number of firmaments, if they did not obviously interfere with the best land-drainage, solid building, correct measuring, and judicious boring (for coal). In fact, he had a reverential soul with a strong practical intelligence. But he could not manage finance: he knew values well, but he had no keenness of imagination for monetary results in the shape of profit and loss: and having ascertained this to his cost, he determined to give up all forms of his beloved "business" which required that talent. He gave himself up entirely to the many kinds of work which he could do without handling capital, and was one of those precious men within his own district whom everybody would choose to work for them, because he did his work well, charged very little, and often declined to charge at all. It is no wonder, then, that the Garths were poor, and "lived in a small way." However, they did not mind it.

CHAPTER XXV

"Love seeketh not itself to please,
  Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
  And builds a heaven in hell's despair.

. . . .

Love seeketh only self to please,
  To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
  And builds a hell in heaven's despite."
—W. Blake: *Songs of Experience.*

Fred Vincy wanted to arrive at Stone Court when Mary could not expect him, and when his uncle was not down stairs: in that case she might be sitting alone in the wainscoated parlour. He left his horse in the yard to avoid making a noise on the gravel in front, and entered the parlour without other notice than the noise of the door-handle. Mary was in her usual corner, laughing over Mrs. Piozzi's recollections of Johnson, and looked up with the fun still in her face. It gradually faded as she saw Fred approach her without speaking, and stand before her with his elbow on the mantelpiece, looking ill. She too was silent, only raising her eyes to him inquiringly.

"Mary," he began, "I am a good-for-nothing blackguard."

"I should think one of those epithets would do at a time," said Mary, trying to smile, but feeling alarmed.

"I know you will never think well of me any more. You will think me a liar. You will think me dishonest. You will think I didn't care for you, or your father and mother. You always do make the worst of me, I know."

"I cannot deny that I shall think all that of you, Fred, if you give me good reasons. But please to tell me at once what you have done. I would rather know the painful truth than imagine it."

"I owed money—a hundred and sixty pounds. I asked your father to put his name to a bill. I thought it would not signify to him. I made sure of paying the money myself, and I have tried as hard as I could. And now, I have been so unlucky—a horse has turned out badly—I can only pay fifty pounds. And I can't ask my father for the money: he would not give me a farthing. And my uncle gave me a hundred a little while ago. So what can I do? And now your father has no ready money to spare, and your mother will have to pay away her ninety-two pounds that she has saved, and she says your savings must go too. You see what a——"

"Oh, poor mother, poor father!" said Mary, her eyes filling with tears, and a little sob rising which she tried to repress. She looked straight before her and took no notice of Fred, all the consequences at home becoming present to her. He too remained silent for some moments, feeling more miserable than ever.

"I wouldn't have hurt you so for the world, Mary," he said at last. "You can never forgive me."

"What does it matter whether I forgive you?" said Mary passionately. "Would that make it any better for my mother to lose the money she has been earning by lessons for four years, that she might send Alfred to Mr. Hanmer's? Should you think all that pleasant enough if I forgave you?"

"Say what you like, Mary. I deserve it all."

"I don't want to say anything," said Mary, more quietly; "my anger is of no use." She dried her eyes, threw aside her book, rose and fetched her sewing.

Fred followed her with his eyes, hoping that they would meet hers, and in that way find access for his imploring penitence. But no! Mary could easily avoid looking upward.

"I do care about your mother's money going," he said, when she was seated again and sewing quickly. "I wanted to ask you, Mary—don't you think that Mr. Featherstone—if you were to tell him—tell him, I mean, about apprenticing Alfred—would advance the money?"

"My family is not fond of begging, Fred. We would rather work for our money. Besides, you say that Mr. Featherstone has lately given you a hundred pounds. He rarely makes presents; he has never made presents to us. I am sure my father will not ask him for anything; and even if I chose to beg of him, it would be of no use."

"I am so miserable, Mary—if you knew how miserable I am, you would be sorry for me."

"There are other things to be more sorry for than that. But selfish people always think their own discomfort of more importance than anything else in the world: I see enough of that every day."

"It is hardly fair to call me selfish. If you knew what things other young men do, you would think me a good way off the worst."

"I know that people who spend a great deal of money on themselves without knowing how they shall pay, must be selfish. They are always thinking of what they can get for themselves, and not of what other people may lose."

"Any man may be unfortunate, Mary, and find himself unable to pay when he meant it. There is not a better man in the world than your father, and yet he got into trouble."

"How dare you make any comparison between my father and you, Fred?" said Mary, in a deep tone of indignation. "He never got into trouble by thinking of his own idle pleasures, but because he was always thinking of the work he was doing for other people. And he has fared hard, and worked hard to make good everybody's loss."

"And you think that I shall never try to make good anything, Mary. It is not generous to believe the worst of a man. When you have got any power over him, I think you might try and use it to make him better; but that is what you never do. However, I'm going," Fred ended, languidly. "I shall never speak to you about anything again. I'm very sorry for all the trouble I've caused—that's all."

Mary had dropped her work out of her hand and looked up. There is often something maternal even in a girlish love, and Mary's hard experience had wrought her nature to an impressibility very different from that hard slight thing which we call girlishness. At Fred's last words she felt an instantaneous pang, something like what a mother feels at the imagined sobs or cries of her naughty truant child, which may lose itself and get harm. And when, looking up, her eyes met his dull despairing glance, her pity for him surmounted her anger and all her other anxieties.

"Oh, Fred, how ill you look! Sit down a moment. Don't go yet. Let me tell uncle that you are here. He has been wondering that he has not seen you for a whole week." Mary spoke hurriedly, saying the words that came first without knowing very well what they were, but saying them in a half-soothing, half-beseeching tone, and rising as if to go away to Mr. Featherstone. Of course Fred felt as if the clouds had parted and a gleam had come: he moved and stood in her way.

"Say one word, Mary, and I will do anything. Say you will not think the worst of me—will not give me up altogether."

"As if it were any pleasure to me to think ill of you," said Mary, in a mournful tone. "As if it were not very painful to me to see you an idle frivolous creature. How can you bear to be so contemptible, when others are working and striving, and there are so many things to be done—how can you bear to be fit for nothing in the world that is useful? And with so much good in your disposition, Fred,—you might be worth a great deal."

"I will try to be anything you like, Mary, if you will say that you love me."

"I should be ashamed to say that I loved a man who must always be hanging on others, and reckoning on what they would do for him. What will you be when you are forty? Like Mr. Bowyer, I suppose—just as idle, living in Mrs. Beck's front parlour—fat and shabby, hoping somebody will invite you to dinner—spending your morning in learning a comic song—oh no! learning a tune on the flute."

Mary's lips had begun to curl with a smile as soon as she had asked that question about Fred's future (young souls are mobile), and before she ended, her face had its full illumination of fun. To him it was like the cessation of an ache that Mary could laugh at him, and with a passive sort of smile he tried to reach her hand; but she slipped away quickly towards the door and said, " I shall tell uncle. You *must* see him for a moment or two.

Fred secretly felt that his future was guaranteed against the fulfilment of Mary's sarcastic prophecies, apart from that " anything " which he was ready to do if she would define it. He never dared in Mary's presence to approach the subject of his expectations from Mr. Featherstone, and she always ignored them, as if everything depended on himself. But if ever he actually came into the property, she must recognise the change in his position. All this passed through his mind somewhat languidly, before he went up to see his uncle. He stayed but a little while, excusing himself on the ground that he had a cold; and Mary did not reappear before he left the house. But as he rode home, he began to be more conscious of being ill, than of being melancholy.

When Caleb Garth arrived at Stone Court soon after dusk, Mary was not surprised, although he seldom had leisure for paying her a visit, and was not at all fond of having to talk with Mr. Featherstone. The old man, on the other hand, felt himself ill at ease with a brother-in-law whom he could not annoy, who did not mind about being considered poor, had nothing to ask of him, and understood all kinds of farming and mining business better than he did. But Mary had felt sure that her parents would want to see her, and if her father had not come, she would have obtained leave to go home for an hour or two the next day. After discussing prices during tea with Mr. Featherstone, Caleb rose to bid him good-bye, and said, " I want to speak to you, Mary."

She took a candle into another large parlour, where there was no fire, and setting down the feeble light on the dark mahogany table, turned round to her father, and putting her arms round his neck kissed him with childish kisses which he delighted in,—the expression of his large brows softening as the expression of a great beautiful dog softens when it is caressed. Mary was his favourite child, and whatever Susan might say, and right as she was on all other subjects, Caleb thought it natural that Fred or any one else should think Mary more lovable than other girls.

" I've got something to tell you, my dear," said Caleb in his hesitating way. "No very good news; but then it might be worse."

"About money, father? I think I know what it is."

"Ay? how can that be? You see, I've been a bit of a fool again, and put my name to a bill, and now it comes to paying; and your mother has got to part with her savings, that's the worst of it, and even they won't quite make things even. We wanted a hundred and ten pounds: your mother has ninety-two, and I have none to spare in the bank; and she thinks that you will have some savings."

"Oh yes; I have more than four-and-twenty pounds. I thought you would come, father, so I put it in my bag. See! beautiful white notes and gold."

Mary took out the folded money from her reticule and put it into her father's hand.

"Well, but how—we only want eighteen—here, put the rest back, child,—but how did you know about it?" said Caleb, who, in his unconquerable indifference to money, was beginning to be chiefly concerned about the relation the affair might have to Mary's affections.

"Fred told me this morning."

"Ah! Did he come on purpose?"

"Yes, I think so. He was a good deal distressed."

"I'm afraid Fred is not to be trusted, Mary," said the father, with hesitating tenderness. "He means better than he acts, perhaps. But I should think it a pity for anybody's happiness to be wrapped up in him, and so would your mother."

"And so should I, father," said Mary, not looking up, but putting the back of her father's hand against her cheek.

"I don't want to pry, my dear. But I was afraid there might be something between you and Fred, and I wanted to caution you. You see, Mary"—here Caleb's voice became more tender; he had been pushing his hat about on the table and looking at it, but finally he turned his eyes on his daughter—"a woman, let her be as good as she may, has got to put up with the life her husband makes for her. Your mother has had to put up with a good deal because of me."

Mary turned the back of her father's hand to her lips and smiled at him.

"Well, well, nobody's perfect, but"—here Mr. Garth shook his head to help out the inadequacy of words—"what I am thinking of is—what it must be for a wife when she's never sure of her husband, when he hasn't got a principle in him to make him more afraid of doing the wrong thing by others than of getting his own toes pinched. That's the long and the short of it, Mary. Young folks may get fond of each other before they know what life is, and they may think it all holiday if they can only get together; but it soon turns into working day, my dear. However, you have more sense than most, and you haven't been kept in cotton-wool: there may be no occasion for me to say this, but a father trembles for his daughter, and you are all by yourself here."

"Don't fear for me, father," said Mary, gravely meeting her father's eyes; "Fred has always been very good to me; he is kind-hearted and affectionate, and not false, I think, with all his self-indulgence. But I will never engage myself to one who has no manly independence, and who goes on loitering away his time on the chance that others will provide for him. You and my mother have taught me too much pride for that."

"That's right—that's right. Then I am easy," said Mr. Garth, taking up his hat. "But it's hard to run away with your earnings, child."

"Father!" said Mary, in her deepest tone of remonstrance. "Take pocketfuls of love besides to them all at home," was her last word before he closed the outer door on himself.

"I suppose your father wanted your earnings," said old Mr. Featherstone, with his usual power of unpleasant surmise, when Mary returned to him. "He makes but a tight fit, I reckon. You're of age now; you ought to be saving for yourself."

"I consider my father and mother the best part of myself, sir," said Mary, coldly.

Mr. Featherstone grunted: he could not deny that an ordinary sort of girl like her might be expected to be useful, so he thought of another rejoinder, disagreeable enough to be always apropos. "If Fred Vincy comes to-morrow, now, don't you keep him chattering: let him come up to me."

CHAPTER XXVI

"He beats me and I rail at him: O worthy satisfaction! would it were otherwise—that I could beat him while he railed at me."—*Troilus and Cressida.*

But Fred did not go to Stone Court the next day, for reasons that were quite peremptory. From those visits to unsanitary Houndsley streets in search of Diamond, he had brought back not only a bad bargain in horse-flesh, but the further misfortune of some ailment which for a day or two had seemed mere depression and headache, but which got so much worse when he returned from his visit to Stone Court that, going into the dining-room, he threw himself on the sofa, and in answer to his mother's anxious question, said, "I feel very ill: I think you must send for Wrench."

Wrench came but did not apprehend anything serious, spoke of a "slight derangement," and did not speak of coming again on the morrow. He had a due value for the Vincys' house, but the wariest men are apt to be a little dulled by routine, and on worried mornings will sometimes go through their business with the zest of the daily bell-ringer. Mr. Wrench was a small, neat, bilious man, with a well-dressed wig: he had a laborious practice, an irascible temper, a lymphatic wife and seven children; and he was already rather late before setting out on a four-miles' drive to meet Dr. Minchin on the other side of Tipton, the decease of Hicks, a rural practitioner, having increased Middlemarch practice in that direction. Great statesmen err, and why not small medical men? Mr. Wrench did not neglect sending the usual white parcels, which this time had black and drastic contents. Their effect was not alleviating to poor Fred, who, however, unwilling as he said to believe that he was "in for an illness," rose at his usual easy hour the next morning and went downstairs meaning to breakfast, but succeeded in nothing but in sitting and shivering by the fire. Mr. Wrench was again sent for, but was gone on his rounds, and Mrs. Vincy, seeing her darling's changed looks and general misery, began to cry and said she would send for Dr. Sprague.

"Oh, nonsense, mother! It's nothing," said Fred, putting out his hot dry hand to her, "I shall soon be all right. I must have taken cold in that nasty damp ride."

"Mamma!" said Rosamond, who was seated near the window (the dining-room windows looked on that highly respectable street called Lowick Gate), "there is Mr. Lydgate, stopping to speak to some one. If I were you I would call him in. He has cured Ellen Bulstrode. They say he cures every one."

Mrs. Vincy sprang to the window and opened it in an instant, thinking only of Fred and not of medical etiquette. Lydgate was only two yards off on the other side of some iron palisading, and turned round at the sudden sound of the sash, before she called to him. In two minutes he was in the room, and Rosamond went out, after waiting just long enough to show a pretty anxiety conflicting with her sense of what was becoming.

Lydgate had to hear a narrative in which Mrs. Vincy's mind insisted with remarkable instinct on every point of minor importance, especially on what Mr. Wrench had said and had not said about coming again. That there might be an awkward affair with Wrench, Lydgate saw at once; but the case was serious enough to make him dismiss that consideration: he was convinced that Fred was in the pink-skinned stage of typhoid fever, and that he had taken just the wrong medicines. He must go to bed immediately, must have a regular nurse, and various appliances and precautions must be used, about which Lydgate was particular. Poor Mrs. Vincy's terror at these indications of danger found vent in such words as came most easily. She thought it "very ill usage on the part of Mr. Wrench, who had attended their house so many years in preference to Mr. Peacock, though Mr. Peacock was equally a friend. Why Mr. Wrench should neglect her children more than others, she could not for the life of her understand. He had not neglected Mrs. Larcher's when they had the measles, nor indeed would Mrs. Vincy have wished that he should. And if anything should happen . . ."

Here poor Mrs. Vincy's spirit quite broke down, and her Niobe-throat and good-humoured face were sadly convulsed. This was in the hall out of Fred's hearing, but Rosamond had opened the drawing-room door, and now came forward anxiously. Lydgate apologised for Mr. Wrench, said that the symptoms yesterday might have been disguising, and that this form of fever was very equivocal in its beginnings: he would go immediately to the druggist's and have a prescription made up in order to lose no time, but he would write to Mr. Wrench and tell him what had been done.

"But you must come again—you must go on attending Fred. I can't have my boy left to anybody who may come or not. I bear nobody ill-will, thank God, and Mr. Wrench saved me in the pleurisy, but he'd better have let me die—if—if——"

"I will meet Mr. Wrench here, then, shall I?" said Lydgate, really believing that Wrench was not well prepared to deal wisely with a case of this kind.

"Pray make that arrangement, Mr. Lydgate," said Rosamond, coming to her mother's aid, and supporting her arm to lead her away.

When Mr. Vincy came home he was very angry with Wrench, and did not care if he never came into his house again. Lydgate should go on now, whether Wrench liked it or not. It was no joke to have fever in the house. Everybody must be sent to now, not to come to dinner on Thursday. And Pritchard needn't get up any wine: brandy was the best thing against infection. "I shall drink brandy," added Mr. Vincy emphatically—as much as to say, this was not an occasion for firing with blank-cartridges. "He's an uncommonly unfortunate lad, is Fred. He'd need have some luck by-and-by to make up for all this—else I don't know who'd have an eldest son."

"Don't say so, Vincy," said the mother, with a quivering lip, "if you don't want him to be taken from me."

"It will worret you to death, Lucy; *that* I can see," said Mr. Vincy, more mildly. "However, Wrench shall know what I think of the matter." (What Mr. Vincy thought confusedly was, that the fever might somehow have been hindered if Wrench had shown the proper solicitude about his—the Mayor's—family.) "I'm the last man to give in to the cry about new doctors or new parsons, either—whether they're Bulstrode's men or not. But Wrench shall know what I think, take it as he will."

Wrench did not take it at all well. Lydgate was as polite as he could be in his offhand way, but politeness in a man who has placed you at a disadvantage is only an additional exasperation, especially if he happens to have been an object of dislike beforehand. Country practitioners used to be an irritable species, susceptible on the point of honour; and Mr. Wrench was one of the most irritable among them. He did not refuse to meet Lydgate in the evening, but his temper was somewhat tried on the occasion. He had to hear Mrs. Vincy say—

"Oh, Mr. Wrench, what have I ever done that you should use me so?—To go away, and never to come again! And my boy might have been stretched a corpse!"

Mr. Vincy, who had been keeping up a sharp fire on the enemy Infection, and was a good deal heated in consequence, started up when he heard Wrench come in, and went into the hall to let him know what he thought.

"I'll tell you what, Wrench, this is beyond a joke," said the Mayor, who of late had had to rebuke offenders with an official air, and now broadened himself by putting his thumbs in his armholes.—"To let fever get unawares into a house like this. There are some things that ought to be actionable, and are not so—that's my opinion."

But irrational reproaches were easier to bear than the sense of being instructed, or rather the sense that a younger man, like Lydgate, inwardly considered him in need of instruction, for "in point of fact," Mr. Wrench afterwards said, Lydgate paraded flighty, foreign notions, which would not wear. He swallowed his ire for the moment, but he afterwards wrote to decline further attendance in the case. The house might be a good one, but Mr. Wrench was not going to truckle to anybody on a professional matter. He reflected, with much probability on his side, that Lydgate would by-and-by be caught tripping too, and that his ungentlemanly attempts to discredit the sale of drugs by his professional brethren would by-and-by recoil on himself. He threw out biting remarks on Lydgate's tricks, worthy only of a quack, to get himself a factitious reputation with credulous people. That cant about cures was never got up by sound practitioners.

This was a point on which Lydgate smarted as much as Wrench could desire. To be puffed by ignorance was not only humiliating, but perilous, and not more enviable than the reputation of the weather-prophet. He was impatient of the foolish expectations amidst which all work must be carried on, and likely enough to damage himself as much as Mr. Wrench could wish, by an unprofessional openness.

However, Lydgate was installed as medical attendant on the Vincys, and the event was a subject of general conversation in Middlemarch. Some said, that the Vincys had behaved scandalously, that Mr. Vincy had threatened Wrench, and that Mrs. Vincy had accused him of poisoning her son. Others were of opinion that Mr. Lydgate's passing by was providential, that he was wonderfully clever in fevers, and that Bulstrode was in the right to bring him forward. Many people believed that Lydgate's coming to the town at all was really due to Bulstrode; and Mrs. Taft, who was always counting stitches and gathered her information in misleading fragments caught between the rows of her knitting, had got it into her head that Mr. Lydgate was a natural son of Bulstrode's, a fact which seemed to justify her suspicions of evangelical laymen.

She one day communicated this piece of knowledge to Mrs. Farebrother, who did not fail to tell her son of it, observing—

"I should not be surprised at anything in Bulstrode, but I should be sorry to think it of Mr. Lydgate."

"Why, mother," said Mr. Farebrother, after an explosive laugh, "you know very well that Lydgate is of a good family in the North. He never heard of Bulstrode before he came here."

"That is satisfactory so far as Mr. Lydgate is concerned, Camden," said the old lady, with an air of precision. "But as to Bulstrode—the report may be true of some other son."

CHAPTER XXVII

> "Let the high Muse chant loves Olympian:
> We are but mortals, and must sing of man."

An eminent philosopher among my friends, who can dignify even your ugly furniture by lifting it into the serene light of science, has shown me this pregnant little fact. Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumination, and lo! the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. It is demonstrable that the scratches are going everywhere impartially, and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement, its light falling with an exclusive optical selection. These things are a parable. The scratches are events, and the candle is the egoism of any person now absent—of Miss Vincy, for example. Rosamond had a Providence of her own who had kindly made her more charming than other girls, and who seemed to have arranged Fred's illness and Mr. Wrench's mistake in order to bring her and Lydgate within effective proximity. It would have been to contravene these arrangements if Rosamond had consented to go away to Stone Court or elsewhere, as her parents wished her to do, especially since Mr. Lydgate thought the precaution needless. Therefore, while Miss Morgan and the children were sent away to a farmhouse the morning after Fred's illness had declared itself, Rosamond refused to leave papa and mamma.

Poor mamma indeed was an object to touch any creature born of woman; and Mr. Vincy, who doated on his wife, was more alarmed on her account than on Fred's. But for his insistence she would have taken no rest: her brightness was all bedimmed; unconscious of her costume which had always been so fresh and gay, she was like a sick bird with languid eye and plumage ruffled, her senses dulled to the sights and sounds that used most to interest her. Fred's delirium, in which he seemed to be wandering out of her reach, tore her heart. After her first outburst against Mr. Wrench she went about very quietly: her one low cry was to Lydgate. She would follow him out of the room and put her hand on his arm moaning out, "Save my boy." Once she pleaded, "He has always been good to me, Mr. Lydgate: he never had a hard word for his mother,"—as if poor Fred's suffering were an accusation against him. All the deepest fibres of the mother's memory were stirred, and the young man whose voice took a gentler tone when he spoke to her, was one with the babe whom she had loved, with a love new to her, before he was born.

"I have good hope, Mrs. Vincy," Lydgate would say. "Come down with me and let us talk about the food." In that way he led her to the parlour where Rosamond was, and made a change for her, surprising her into taking some tea or broth which had been prepared for her. There was a constant understanding between him and Rosamond on these matters. He almost always saw her before going to the sick-room, and she appealed to him as to what she could do for mamma. Her presence of mind and adroitness in carrying out his hints were admirable, and it is not wonderful that the idea of seeing Rosamond began to mingle itself with his interest in the case. Especially when the critical stage was passed, and he began to feel confident of Fred's recovery. In the more doubtful time, he had advised calling in Dr. Sprague (who, if he could, would rather have remained neutral on Wrench's account); but after two consultations, the conduct of the case was left to Lydgate, and there was every reason to make him assiduous. Morning and evening he was at Mr. Vincy's, and gradually the visits became cheerful as Fred became simply feeble, and lay not only in need of the utmost petting but conscious of it, so that Mrs. Vincy felt as if after all the illness had made a festival for her tenderness.

Both father and mother held it an added reason for good spirits, when old Mr. Featherstone sent messages by Lydgate, saying that Fred must make haste and get well, as he, Peter Featherstone, could not do without him, and missed his visits sadly. The old man himself was getting bedridden. Mrs. Vincy told these messages to Fred when he could listen, and he turned towards her his delicate, pinched face, from which all the thick blond hair had been cut away, and in which the eyes seemed to have got larger, yearning for some word about Mary—wondering what she felt about his illness. No word passed his lips; but "to hear with eyes belongs to love's rare wit," and the mother in the fulness of her heart not only divined Fred's longing, but felt ready for any sacrifice in order to satisfy him.

"If I can only see my boy strong again," she said, in her loving folly; "and who knows?—perhaps master of Stone Court! and he can marry anybody he likes then."

"Not if they won't have me, mother," said Fred. The illness had made him childish, and tears came as he spoke.

"Oh, take a bit of jelly, my dear," said Mrs. Vincy, secretly incredulous of any such refusal.

She never left Fred's side when her husband was not in the house, and thus Rosamond was in the unusual position of being much alone. Lydgate, naturally, never thought of staying long with her, yet it seemed that the brief impersonal conversations they had together were creating that peculiar intimacy which consists in shyness. They were obliged to look at each other in speaking, and somehow the looking could not be carried through as the matter of course which it really was. Lydgate began to feel this sort of consciousness unpleasant, and one day looked down, or anywhere, like an ill-worked puppet. But this turned out badly: the next day, Rosamond looked down, and the consequence was that when their eyes met again, both were more conscious than before. There was no help for this in science, and as Lydgate did not want to flirt, there seemed to be no help for it in folly. It was therefore a relief when neighbours no longer considered the house in quarantine, and when the chances of seeing Rosamond alone were very much reduced.

But that intimacy of mutual embarrassment, in which each feels that the other is feeling something, having once existed, its effect is not to be done away with. Talk about the weather and other well-bred topics is apt to seem a hollow device, and behaviour can hardly become easy unless it frankly recognises a mutual fascination—which of course need not mean anything deep or serious. This was the way in which Rosamond and Lydgate slid gracefully into ease, and made their intercourse lively again. Visitors came and went as usual, there was once more music in the drawing-room, and all the extra hospitality of Mr. Vincy's mayoralty returned. Lydgate, whenever he could, took his seat by Rosamond's side, and lingered to hear her music, calling himself her captive—meaning, all the while, not to be her captive. The preposterousness of the notion that he could at once set up a satisfactory establishment as a married man was a sufficient guarantee against danger. This play at being a little in love was agreeable, and did not interfere with graver pursuits. Flirtation, after all, was not necessarily a singeing process. Rosamond, for her part, had never enjoyed the days so much in her life before: she was sure of being admired by some one worth captivating, and she did not distinguish flirtation from love, either in herself or in another. She seemed to be sailing with a fair wind just whither she would go, and her thoughts were much occupied with a handsome house in Lowick Gate which she hoped would by-and-by be vacant. She was quite determined, when she was married, to rid herself adroitly of all the visitors who were not agreeable to her at her father's; and she imagined the drawing-room in her favourite house with various styles of furniture.

Certainly her thoughts were much occupied with Lydgate himself; he seemed to her almost perfect: if he had known his notes so that his enchantment under her music had been less like an emotional elephant's, and if he had been able to discriminate better the refinements of her taste in dress, she could hardly have mentioned a deficiency in him. How different he was from young Plymdale or Mr. Caius Larcher! Those young men had not a notion of French, and could speak on no subject with striking knowledge, except perhaps the dyeing and carrying trades, which of course they were ashamed to mention; they were Middlemarch gentry, elated with their silver-headed whips and satin stocks, but embarrassed in their manners, and timidly jocose: even Fred was above them, having at least the accent and manner of a university man. Whereas Lydgate was always listened to, bore himself with the careless politeness of conscious superiority, and seemed to have the right clothes on by a certain natural affinity, without ever having to think about them. Rosamond was proud when he entered the room, and when he approached her with a distinguishing smile, she had a delicious sense that she was the object of enviable homage. If Lydgate had been aware of all the pride he excited in that delicate bosom, he might have been just as well pleased as any other man, even the most densely ignorant of humoral pathology or fibrous tissue: he held it one of the prettiest attitudes of the feminine mind to adore a man's pre-eminence without too precise a knowledge of what it consisted in.

But Rosamond was not one of those helpless girls who betray themselves unawares, and whose behaviour is awkwardly driven by their impulses, instead of being steered by wary grace and propriety. Do you imagine that her rapid forecast and rumination concerning house-furniture and society were ever discernible in her conversation, even with her mamma? On the contrary, she would have expressed the prettiest surprise and disapprobation if she had heard that another young lady had been detected in that immodest prematureness—indeed, would probably have disbelieved in its possibility. For Rosamond never showed any unbecoming knowledge, and was always that combination of correct sentiments, music, dancing, drawing, elegant note-writing, private album for extracted verse, and perfect blond loveliness, which made the irresistible woman for the doomed man of that date. Think no unfair evil of her, pray: she had no wicked plots, nothing sordid or mercenary; in fact, she never thought of money except as something necessary which other people would always provide. She was not in the habit of devising falsehoods, and if her statements were no direct clue to fact, why, they were not intended in that light—they were among her elegant accomplishments, intended to please. Nature had inspired many arts in finishing Mrs. Lemon's favourite pupil, who by general consent (Fred's excepted) was a rare compound of beauty, cleverness, and amiability.

Lydgate found it more and more agreeable to be with her, and there was no constraint now, there was a delightful interchange of influence in their eyes, and what they said had that superfluity of meaning for them, which is observable with some sense of flatness by a third person; still they had no interviews or asides from which a third person need have been excluded. In fact, they flirted; and Lydgate was secure in the belief that they did nothing else. If a man could not love and be wise, surely he could flirt and be wise at the same time? Really, the men in Middlemarch, except Mr. Farebrother, were great bores, and Lydgate did not care about commercial politics or cards: what was he to do for relaxation? He was often invited to the Bulstrodes'; but the girls there were hardly out of the schoolroom; and Mrs. Bulstrode's *naïve* way of conciliating piety and worldliness, the nothingness of this life and the desirability of cut glass, the consciousness at once of filthy rags and the best damask, was not a sufficient relief from the weight of her husband's invariable seriousness. The Vincys' house, with all its faults, was the pleasanter by contrast; besides, it nourished Rosamond—sweet to look at as a half-opened blush-rose, and adorned with accomplishments for the refined amusement of man.

But he made some enemies, other than medical, by his success with Miss Vincy. One evening he came into the drawing-room rather late, when several other visitors were there. The card-table had drawn off the elders, and Mr. Ned Plymdale (one of the good matches in Middlemarch, though not one of its leading minds) was in *tête-à-tête* with Rosamond. He had brought the last "Keepsake," the gorgeous watered-silk publication which marked modern progress at that time; and he considered himself very fortunate that he could be the first to look over it with her, dwelling on the ladies and gentlemen with shiny copper-plate cheeks and copper-plate smiles, and pointing to comic verses as capital and sentimental stories as interesting. Rosamond was gracious, and Mr. Ned was satisfied that he had the very best thing in art and literature as a medium for "paying addresses"—the very thing to please a nice girl. He had also reasons, deep rather than ostensible, for being satisfied with his own appearance. To superficial observers his chin had too vanishing an aspect, looking as if it were being gradually reabsorbed. And it did indeed cause him some difficulty about the fit of his satin stocks, for which chins were at that time useful.

"I think the Honourable Mrs. S. is something like you," said Mr. Ned. He kept the book open at the bewitching portrait, and looked at it rather languishingly.

"Her back is very large; she seems to have sat for that," said Rosamond, not meaning any satire, but thinking how red young Plymdale's hands were, and wondering why Lydgate did not come. She went on with her tatting all the while.

"I did not say she was as beautiful as you are," said Mr. Ned, venturing to look from the portrait to its rival.

"I suspect you of being an adroit flatterer," said Rosamond, feeling sure that she should have to reject this young gentleman a second time.

But now Lydgate came in; the book was closed before he reached Rosamond's corner, and as he took his seat with easy confidence on the other side of her, young Plymdale's jaw fell like a barometer towards the cheerless side of change. Rosamond enjoyed not only Lydgate's presence but its effect: she liked to excite jealousy.

"What a late comer you are!" she said, as they shook hands. "Mamma had given you up a little while ago. How do you find Fred?"

"As usual; going on well, but slowly. I want him to go away—to Stone Court, for example. But your mamma seems to have some objection."

"Poor fellow!" said Rosamond, prettily. "You will see Fred so changed," she added, turning to the other suitor; "we have looked to Mr. Lydgate as our guardian angel during this illness."

Mr. Ned smiled nervously, while Lydgate, drawing the "Keepsake" towards him and opening it, gave a short scornful laugh and tossed up his chin, as if in wonderment at human folly.

"What are you laughing at so profanely?" said Rosamond, with bland neutrality.

"I wonder which would turn out to be the silliest—the engravings or the writing here," said Lydgate, in his most convinced tone, while he turned over the pages quickly, seeming to see all through the book in no time, and showing his large white hands to much advantage, as Rosamond thought. "Do look at this bridegroom coming out of church: did you ever see such a 'sugared invention'—as the Elizabethans used to say? Did any haberdasher ever look so smirking? Yet I will answer for it the story makes him one of the first gentlemen in the land."

"You are so severe, I am frightened at you," said Rosamond, keeping her amusement duly moderate. Poor young Plymdale had lingered with admiration over this very engraving, and his spirit was stirred.

"There are a great many celebrated people writing in the 'Keepsake,' at all events," he said, in a tone at once piqued and timid. "This is the first time I have heard it called silly."

"I think I shall turn round on you and accuse you of being a Goth," said Rosamond, looking at Lydgate with a smile. "I suspect you know nothing about Lady Blessington and L. E. L." Rosamond herself was not without relish for these writers, but she did not readily commit herself by admiration, and was alive to the slightest hint that anything was not, according to Lydgate, in the very highest taste.

"But Sir Walter Scott—I suppose Mr. Lydgate knows him," said young Plymdale, a little cheered by this advantage.

"Oh, I read no literature now," said Lydgate, shutting the book, and pushing it away. "I read so much when I was a lad, that I suppose it will last me all my life. I used to know Scott's poems by heart."

"I should like to know when you left off," said Rosamond, "because then I might be sure that I knew something which you did not know."

"Mr. Lydgate would say that was not worth knowing," said Mr. Ned, purposely caustic.

"On the contrary," said Lydgate, showing no smart, but smiling with exasperating confidence at Rosamond. "It would be worth knowing by the fact that Miss Vincy could tell it me."

Young Plymdale soon went to look at the whist-playing, thinking that Lydgate was one of the most conceited, unpleasant fellows it had ever been his ill-fortune to meet.

"How rash you are!" said Rosamond, inwardly delighted. "Do you see that you have given offence?"

"What—is it Mr. Plymdale's book? I am sorry. I didn't think about it."

"I shall begin to admit what you said of yourself when you first came here—that you are a bear, and want teaching by the birds."

"Well, there is a bird who can teach me what she will. Don't I listen to her willingly?"

To Rosamond it seemed as if she and Lydgate were as good as engaged. That they were some time to be engaged had long been an idea in her mind; and ideas, we know, tend to a more solid kind of existence, the necessary materials being at hand. It is true, Lydgate had the counter-idea of remaining unengaged; but this was a mere negative, a shadow cast by other resolves which themselves were capable of shrinking. Circumstance was almost sure to be on the side of Rosamond's idea, which had a shaping activity and looked through watchful blue eyes, whereas Lydgate's lay blind and unconcerned as a jelly-fish which gets melted without knowing it.

That evening when he went home, he looked at his phials to see how a process of maceration was going on, with undisturbed interest; and he wrote out his daily notes with as much precision as usual. The reveries from which it was difficult for him to detach himself were ideal constructions of something else than Rosamond's virtues, and the primitive tissue was still his fair unknown. Moreover, he was beginning to feel some zest for the growing though half-suppressed feud between him and the other medical men, which was likely to become more manifest, now that Bulstrode's method of managing the new hospital was about to be declared; and there were various inspiriting signs that his non-acceptance by some of Peacock's patients might be counterbalanced by the impression he had produced in other quarters. Only a few days later, when he had happened to overtake Rosamond on the Lowick road and had got down from his horse to walk by her side until he had quite protected her from a passing drove, he had been stopped by a servant on horseback with a message calling him in to a house of some importance where Peacock had never attended; and it was the second instance of this kind. The servant was Sir James Chettam's, and the house was Lowick Manor.

CHAPTER XXVIII

1st Gent. All times are good to seek your wedded home
Bringing a mutual delight.
2nd Gent. Why, true.
The calendar hath not an evil day
For souls made one by love, and even death
Were sweetness, if it came like rolling waves
While they two clasped each other, and foresaw
No life apart.

Mr. and Mrs. Casaubon, returning from their wedding journey, arrived at Lowick Manor in the middle of January. A light snow was falling as they descended at the door, and in the morning, when Dorothea passed from her dressing-room into the blue-green boudoir that we know of, she saw the long avenue of limes lifting their trunks from a white earth, and spreading white branches against the dun and motionless sky. The distant flat shrank in uniform whiteness and low-hanging uniformity of cloud. The very furniture in the room seemed to have shrunk since she saw it before: the stag in the tapestry looked more like a ghost in his ghostly blue-green world; the volumes of polite literature in the bookcase looked more like immovable imitations of books. The bright fire of dry oak-boughs burning on the dogs seemed an incongruous renewal of life and glow—like the figure of Dorothea herself as she entered carrying the red-leather cases containing the cameos for Celia.

She was glowing from her morning toilette as only healthful youth can glow; there was gem-like brightness on her coiled hair and in her hazel eyes; there was warm red life in her lips; her throat had a breathing whiteness above the differing white of the fur which itself seemed to wind about her neck and cling down her blue-grey pelisse with a tenderness gathered from her own, a sentient commingled innocence which kept its loveliness against the crystalline purity of the out-door snow. As she laid the cameo-cases on the table in the bow-window, she unconsciously kept her hands on them, immediately absorbed in looking out on the still, white enclosure which made her visible world.

Mr. Casaubon, who had risen early complaining of palpitation, was in the library giving audience to his curate Mr. Tucker. By-and-by Celia would come in her quality of bridesmaid as well as sister, and through the next weeks there would be wedding visits received and given; all in continuance of that transitional life understood to correspond with the excitement of bridal felicity, and keeping up the sense of busy ineffectiveness, as of a dream which the dreamer begins to suspect. The duties of her married life, contemplated as so great beforehand, seemed to be shrinking with the furniture and the white vapour-walled landscape. The clear heights where she expected to walk in full communion had become difficult to see even in her imagination; the delicious repose of the soul on a complete superior had been shaken into uneasy effort and alarmed with dim presentiment. When would the days begin of that active wifely devotion which was to strengthen her husband's life and exalt her own? Never perhaps, as she had preconceived them; but somehow—still somehow. In this solemnly-pledged union of her life, duty would present itself in some new form of inspiration and give a new meaning to wifely love.

Meanwhile there was the snow and the low arch of dun vapour—there was the stifling oppression of that gentlewoman's world, where everything was done for her and none asked for her aid—where the sense of connection with a manifold pregnant existence had to be kept up painfully as an inward vision, instead of coming from without in claims that would have shaped her energies.—"What shall I do?" "Whatever you please, my dear:" that had been her brief history since she had left off learning morning lessons and practising silly rhythms on the hated piano. Marriage, which was to bring guidance into worthy and imperative occupation, had not yet freed her from the gentlewoman's oppressive liberty: it had not even filled her leisure with the ruminant joy of unchecked tenderness. Her blooming full-pulsed youth stood there in a moral imprisonment which made itself one with the chill, colourless, narrowed landscape, with the shrunken furniture, the never-read books, and the ghostly stag in a pale fantastic world that seemed to be vanishing from the daylight.

In the first minutes when Dorothea looked out she felt nothing but the dreary oppression; then came a keen remembrance, and turning away from the window she walked round the room. The ideas and hopes which were living in her mind when she first saw this room nearly three months before were present now only as memories: she judged them as we judge transient and departed things. All existence seemed to beat with a lower pulse than her own, and her religious faith was a solitary cry, the struggle out of a nightmare in which every object was withering and shrinking away from her. Each remembered thing in the room was disenchanted, was deadened as an unlit transparency, till her wandering gaze came to the group of miniatures, and there at last she saw something which had gathered new breath and meaning: it was the miniature of Mr. Casaubon's aunt Julia, who had made the unfortunate marriage—of Will Ladislaw's grandmother. Dorothea could fancy that it was alive now—the delicate woman's face which yet had a headstrong look, a peculiarity difficult to interpret. Was it only her friends who thought her marriage unfortunate? or did she herself find it out to be a mistake, and taste the salt bitterness of her tears in the merciful silence of the night? What breadths of experience Dorothea seemed to have passed over since she first looked at this miniature! She felt a new companionship with it, as if it had an ear for her and could see how she was looking at it. Here was a woman who had known some difficulty about marriage. Nay, the colours deepened, the lips and chin seemed to get larger, the hair and eyes seemed to be sending out light, the face was masculine and beamed on her with that full gaze which tells her on whom it falls that she is too interesting for the slightest movement of her eyelid to pass unnoticed and uninterpreted. The vivid presentation came like a pleasant glow to Dorothea: she felt herself smiling, and turning from the miniature sat down and looked up as if she were again talking to a figure in front of her. But the smile disappeared as she went on meditating, and at last she said aloud—

"Oh, it was cruel to speak so! How sad—how dreadful!"

She rose quickly and went out of the room, hurrying along the corridor, with the irresistible impulse to go and see her husband and inquire if she could do anything for him. Perhaps Mr. Tucker was gone and Mr. Casaubon was alone in the library. She felt as if all her morning's gloom would vanish if she could see her husband glad because of her presence.

But when she reached the head of the dark oak staircase, there was Celia coming up, and below there was Mr. Brooke, exchanging welcomes and congratulations with Mr. Casaubon.

"Dodo!" said Celia, in her quiet staccato; then kissed her sister, whose arms encircled her, and said no more. I think they both cried a little in a furtive manner, while Dorothea ran down-stairs to greet her uncle.

"I need not ask how you are, my dear," said Mr. Brooke, after kissing her forehead. "Rome has agreed with you, I see—happiness, frescoes, the antique—that sort of thing. Well, it's very pleasant to have you back again, and you understand all about art now, eh? But Casaubon is a little pale, I tell him—a little pale, you know. Studying hard in his holidays is carrying it rather too far. I overdid it at one time"—Mr. Brooke still held Dorothea's hand, but had turned his face to Mr. Casaubon—"about topography, ruins, temples—I thought I had a clue, but I saw it would carry me too far, and nothing might have come of it. You may go any length in that sort of thing, and nothing may come of it, you know."

Dorothea's eyes also were turned up to her husband's face with some anxiety at the idea that those who saw him afresh after absence might be aware of signs which she had not noticed.

"Nothing to alarm you, my dear," said Mr. Brooke, observing her expression. "A little English beef and mutton will soon make a difference. It was all very well to look pale, sitting for the portrait of Aquinas, you know—we got your letter just in time. But Aquinas, now—he was a little too subtle, wasn't he? Does anybody read Aquinas?"

"He is not indeed an author adapted to superficial minds," said Mr. Casaubon, meeting these timely questions with dignified patience.

"You would like coffee in your own room, uncle?" said Dorothea, coming to the rescue.

"Yes; and you must go to Celia: she has great news to tell you, you know. I leave it all to her."

The blue-green boudoir looked much more cheerful when Celia was seated there in a pelisse exactly like her sister's, surveying the cameos with a placid satisfaction, while the conversation passed on to other topics.

"Do you think it nice to go to Rome on a wedding journey?" said Celia, with her ready delicate blush which Dorothea was used to on the smallest occasions.

"It would not suit all—not you, dear, for example," said

Dorothea, quietly. No one would ever know what she thought of a wedding journey to Rome.

"Mrs. Cadwallader says it is nonsense, people going a long journey when they are married. She says they get tired to death of each other, and can't quarrel comfortably, as they would at home. And Lady Chettam says she went to Bath." Celia's colour changed again and again—seemed

> "To come and go with tidings from the heart,
> As it a running messenger had been."

It must mean more than Celia's blushing usually did.

"Celia! has something happened?" said Dorothea, in a tone full of sisterly feeling. "Have you really any great news to tell me?"

"It was because you went away, Dodo. Then there was nobody but me for Sir James to talk to," said Celia, with a certain roguishness in her eyes.

"I understand. It is as I used to hope and believe," said Dorothea, taking her sister's face between her hands, and looking at her half anxiously. Celia's marriage seemed more serious than it used to do.

"It was only three days ago," said Celia. "And Lady Chettam is very kind."

"And you are very happy?"

"Yes. We are not going to be married yet. Because everything is to be got ready. And I don't want to be married so very soon, because I think it is nice to be engaged. And we shall be married all our lives after."

"I do believe you could not marry better, Kitty. Sir James is a good, honourable man," said Dorothea, warmly.

"He has gone on with the cottages, Dodo. He will tell you about them when he comes. Shall you be glad to see him?"

"Of course I shall. How can you ask me?"

"Only I was afraid you would be getting so learned," said Celia, regarding Mr. Casaubon's learning as a kind of damp which might in due time saturate a neighbouring body.

CHAPTER XXIX

> "I found that no genius in another could please me. My unfortunate paradoxes had entirely dried up that source of comfort."—GOLDSMITH.

ONE morning, some weeks after her arrival at Lowick, Dorothea—but why always Dorothea? Was her point of view the only possible one with regard to this marriage? I protest against all our interest, all our effort at understanding being given to the young skins that look blooming in spite of trouble; for these too will get faded, and will know the older and more eating griefs which we are helping to neglect. In spite of the blinking eyes and white moles objectionable to Celia, and the want of muscular curve which was morally painful to Sir James, Mr. Casaubon had an intense consciousness within him, and was spiritually a-hungered like the rest of us. He had done nothing exceptional in marrying—nothing but what society sanctions, and considers an occasion for wreaths and bouquets. It had occurred to him that he must not any longer defer his intention of matrimony, and he had reflected that in taking a wife, a man of good position should expect and carefully choose a blooming young lady—the younger the better, because more educable and submissive—of a rank equal to his own, of religious principles, virtuous disposition, and good understanding. On such a young lady he would make handsome settlements, and he would neglect no arrangement for her happiness: in return, he should receive family pleasures and leave behind him that copy of himself which seemed so urgently required of a man—to the sonneteers of the sixteenth century. Times had altered since then, and no sonneteer had insisted on Mr. Casaubon's leaving a copy of himself; moreover, he had not yet succeeded in issuing copies of his mythological key; but he had always intended to acquit himself by marriage, and the sense that he was fast leaving the years behind him, that the world was getting dimmer and that he felt lonely, was a reason to him for losing no more time in overtaking domestic delights before they too were left behind by the years.

And when he had seen Dorothea he believed that he had found even more than he demanded: she might really be such a helpmate to him as would enable him to dispense with a hired secretary, an aid which Mr. Casaubon had never yet employed and had a suspicious dread of. (Mr. Casaubon was nervously conscious that he was expected to manifest a powerful mind.) Providence, in its kindness, had supplied him with the wife he needed. A wife, a modest young lady, with the purely appreciative, unambitious abilities of her sex, is sure to think her husband's mind powerful. Whether Providence had taken equal care of Miss Brooke in presenting her with Mr. Casaubon was an idea which could hardly occur to him. Society never made the preposterous demand that a man should think as much about his own qualifications for making a charming girl happy as he thinks of hers for making himself happy. As if a man could choose not only his wife but his wife's husband! Or as if he were bound to provide charms for his posterity in his own person!—When Dorothea accepted him with effusion, that was only natural; and Mr. Casaubon believed that his happiness was going to begin.

He had not had much foretaste of happiness in his previous life. To know intense joy without a strong bodily frame, one must have an enthusiastic soul. Mr. Casaubon had never had a strong bodily frame, and his soul was sensitive without being enthusiastic: it was too languid to thrill out of self-consciousness into passionate delight; it went on fluttering in the swampy ground where it was hatched, thinking of its wings and never flying. His experience was of that pitiable kind which shrinks from pity, and fears most of all that it should be known: it was that proud narrow sensitiveness which has not mass enough to spare for transformation into sympathy, and quivers thread-like in small currents of self-preoccupation or at best of an egoistic scrupulosity. And Mr. Casaubon had many scruples: he was capable of a severe self-restraint; he was resolute in being a man of honour according to the code; he would be unimpeachable by any recognised opinion. In conduct these ends had been attained; but the difficulty of making his Key to all Mythologies unimpeachable weighed like lead upon his mind; and the pamphlets—or "Parerga" as he called them—by which he tested his public and deposited small monumental records of his march, were far from having been seen in all their significance. He suspected the Archdeacon of not having read them; he was in painful doubt as to what was really thought of them by the leading minds of Brasenose, and bitterly convinced that his old acquaintance Carp had been the writer of that depreciatory recension which was kept locked in a small drawer of Mr. Casaubon's desk, and also in a dark closet of his verbal memory. These were heavy impressions to struggle against, and brought that melancholy embitterment which is the consequence of all excessive claim: even his religious faith wavered with his wavering trust in his own authorship, and the consolations of the Christian hope in immortality seemed to lean on the immortality of the still unwritten Key to all Mythologies. For my part I am very sorry for him. It is an uneasy lot at best, to be what we call highly taught and yet not to enjoy: to be present at this great spectacle of life and never to be liberated from a small hungry shivering self—never to be fully possessed by the glory we behold, never to have our consciousness rapturously transformed into the vividness of a thought, the ardour of a passion, the energy of an action, but always to be scholarly and uninspired, ambitious and timid, scrupulous and dim-sighted. Becoming a dean or even a bishop would make little difference, I fear, to Mr. Casaubon's uneasiness. Doubtless some ancient Greek has observed that behind the big mask and the speaking-trumpet, there must always be our poor little eyes peeping as usual and our timorous lips more or less under anxious control.

To this mental estate mapped out a quarter of a century before, to sensibilities thus fenced in, Mr. Casaubon had thought of annexing happiness with a lovely young bride; but even before marriage, as we have seen, he found himself under a new depression in the consciousness that the new bliss was not blissful to him. Inclination yearned back to its old, easier custom. And the deeper he went in domesticity the more did the sense of acquitting himself and acting with propriety predominate over any other satisfaction. Marriage, like religion and erudition, nay, like authorship itself, was fated to become an outward requirement, and Edward Casaubon was bent on fulfilling unimpeachably all requirements. Even drawing Dorothea into use in his study, according to his own intention before marriage, was an effort which he was always tempted to defer, and but for her pleading insistence it might never have begun. But she had succeeded in making it a matter of course that she should take her place at an early hour in the library and have work either of reading aloud or copying assigned her. The work had been easier to define because Mr. Casaubon had adopted an immediate intention: there was to be a new Parergon, a small monograph on some lately-traced indications concerning the Egyptian mysteries whereby certain assertions of Warburton's could be corrected. References were extensive even here, but not altogether shoreless; and sentences were actually to be written in the shape wherein they would be scanned by Brasenose and a less formidable posterity. These minor monumental productions were always exciting to Mr. Casaubon: digestion was made difficult by the interference of citations, or by the rivalry of dialectical phrases ringing against each other in his brain. And from the first there was to be a Latin dedication about which everything was uncertain except that it was not to be addressed to Carp: it was a poisonous regret to Mr. Casaubon that he had once addressed a dedication to Carp in which he had numbered that member of the animal kingdom among the *viros nullo ævo perituros*, a mistake which would infallibly lay the dedicator open to ridicule in the next age, and might even be chuckled over by Pike and Tench in the present.

Thus Mr. Casaubon was in one of his busiest epochs, and as I began to say a little while ago, Dorothea joined him early in the library where he had breakfasted alone. Celia at this time was on a second visit to Lowick, probably the last before her marriage, and was in the drawing-room expecting Sir James.

Dorothea had learned to read the signs of her husband's mood, and she saw that the morning had become more foggy there during the last hour. She was going silently to her desk when he said, in that distant tone which implied that he was discharging a disagreeable duty—

"Dorothea, here is a letter for you, which was enclosed in one addressed to me."

It was a letter of two pages, and she immediately looked at the signature.

"Mr. Ladislaw! What can he have to say to me?" she exclaimed, in a tone of pleased surprise. "But," she added, looking at Mr. Casaubon, "I can imagine what he has written to you about."

"You can, if you please, read the letter," said Mr. Casaubon, severely pointing to it with his pen, and not looking at her. "But I may as well say beforehand, that I must decline the proposal it contains to pay a visit here. I trust I may be excused for desiring an interval of complete freedom from such distractions as have been hitherto inevitable, and especially from guests whose desultory vivacity makes their presence a fatigue."

There had been no clashing of temper between Dorothea and her husband since that little explosion in Rome, which had left such strong traces in her mind that it had been easier ever since to quell emotion than to incur the consequence of venting it. But this ill-tempered anticipation that she could desire visits which might be disagreeable to her husband, this gratuitous defence of himself against selfish complaint on her part, was too sharp a sting to be meditated on until after it had been resented. Dorothea had thought that she could have been patient with John Milton, but she had never imagined him behaving in this way; and for a moment Mr. Casaubon seemed to be stupidly undiscerning and odiously unjust. Pity, that "newborn babe" which was by-and-by to rule many a storm within her, did not "stride the blast" on this occasion. With her first words, uttered in a tone that shook him, she startled Mr. Casaubon into looking at her, and meeting the flash of her eyes.

"Why do you attribute to me a wish for anything that would annoy you? You speak to me as if I were something you had to contend against. Wait at least till I appear to consult my own pleasure apart from yours."

"Dorothea, you are hasty," answered Mr. Casaubon, nervously.

Decidedly, this woman was too young to be on the formidable level of wifehood—unless she had been pale and featureless and taken everything for granted.

"I think it was you who were first hasty in your false suppositions about my feeling," said Dorothea, in the same tone. The fire was not dissipated yet, and she thought it was ignoble in her husband not to apologise to her.

"We will, if you please, say no more on this subject, Dorothea. I have neither leisure nor energy for this kind of debate."

Here Mr. Casaubon dipped his pen and made as if he would return to his writing, though his hand trembled so much that the words seemed to be written in an unknown character. There are answers which, in turning away wrath, only send it to the other end of the room, and to have a discussion coolly waived when you feel that justice is all on your own side is even more exasperating in marriage than in philosophy.

Dorothea left Ladislaw's two letters unread on her husband's writing-table and went to her own place, the scorn and indignation within her rejecting the reading of these letters, just as we hurl away any trash towards which we seem to have been suspected of mean cupidity. She did not in the least divine the subtle sources of her husband's bad temper about these letters; she only knew that they had caused him to offend her. She began to work at once, and her hand did not tremble; on the contrary, in writing out the quotations which had been given to her the day before, she felt that she was forming her letters beautifully, and it seemed to her that she saw the construction of the Latin she was copying, and which she was beginning to understand, more clearly than usual. In her indignation there was a sense of superiority, but it went out for the present in firmness of stroke, and did not compress itself into an inward articulate voice pronouncing the once "affable archangel" a poor creature.

There had been this apparent quiet for half an hour, and Dorothea had not looked away from her own table, when she heard the loud bang of a book on the floor, and turning quickly saw Mr. Casaubon on the library-steps clinging forward as if he were in some bodily distress. She started up and bounded towards him in an instant: he was evidently in great straits for breath. Jumping on a stool she got close to his elbow and said with her whole soul melted into tender alarm—

"Can you lean on me, dear?"

He was still for two or three minutes, which seemed endless to her, unable to speak or move, gasping for breath. When at last he descended the three steps and fell backward in the large chair which Dorothea had drawn close to the foot of the ladder, he no longer gasped but seemed helpless and about to faint. Dorothea rang the bell violently, and presently Mr. Casaubon was helped to the couch: he did not faint, and was gradually reviving, when Sir James Chettam came in, having been met in the hall with the news that Mr. Casaubon had "had a fit in the library."

"Good God! this is just what might have been expected," was his immediate thought. If his prophetic soul had been urged to particularise, it seemed to him that "fits" would have been the definite expression alighted upon. He asked his informant, the butler, whether the doctor had been sent for. The butler never knew his master want the doctor before; but would it not be right to send for a physician?

When Sir James entered the library, however, Mr. Casaubon could make some signs of his usual politeness, and Dorothea, who in the reaction from her first terror had been kneeling and sobbing by his side, now rose and herself proposed that some one should ride off for a medical man.

"I recommend you to send for Lydgate," said Sir James. "My mother has called him in, and she has found him uncommonly clever. She has had a poor opinion of the physicians since my father's death."

Dorothea appealed to her husband, and he made a silent sign of approval. So Mr. Lydgate was sent for and he came wonderfully soon, for the messenger, who was Sir James Chettam's man and knew Mr. Lydgate, met him leading his horse along the Lowick road and giving his arm to Miss Vincy.

Celia, in the drawing-room, had known nothing of the trouble till Sir James told her of it. After Dorothea's account, he no longer considered the illness a fit, but still something "of that nature."

"Poor dear Dodo—how dreadful!" said Celia, feeling as much grieved as her own perfect happiness would allow. Her little hands were clasped, and enclosed by Sir James's as a bud is enfolded by a liberal calyx. "It is very shocking that Mr. Casaubon should be ill; but I never did like him. And I think he is not half fond enough of Dorothea; and he ought to be, for I am sure no one else would have had him—do you think they would?"

"I always thought it a horrible sacrifice of your sister," said Sir James.

"Yes. But poor Dodo never did do what other people do, and I think she never will."

"She is a noble creature," said the loyal-hearted Sir James. He had just had a fresh impression of this kind, as he had seen Dorothea stretching her tender arm under her husband's neck and looking at him with unspeakable sorrow. He did not know how much penitence there was in the sorrow.

"Yes," said Celia, thinking it was very well for Sir James to say so, but *he* would not have been comfortable with Dodo. "Shall I go to her? Could I help her, do you think?"

"I think it would be well for you just to go and see her before Lydgate comes," said Sir James, magnanimously. "Only don't stay long."

While Celia was gone, he walked up and down remembering what he had originally felt about Dorothea's engagement, and feeling a revival of his disgust at Mr. Brooke's indifference. If Cadwallader—if every one else had regarded the affair as he, Sir James, had done, the marriage might have been hindered. It was wicked to let a young girl blindly decide her fate in that way, without any effort to save her. Sir James had long ceased to have any regrets on his own account: his heart was satisfied with his engagement to Celia. But he had a chivalrous nature (was not the disinterested service of woman among the ideal glories of old chivalry?): his disregarded love had not turned to bitterness; its death had made sweet odours—floating memories that clung with a consecrating effect to Dorothea. He could remain her brotherly friend, interpreting her actions with generous trustfulness.

CHAPTER XXX

"Qui veut délasser hors de propos, lasse."—PASCAL.

MR. CASAUBON had no second attack of equal severity with the first, and in a few days began to recover his usual condition. But Lydgate seemed to think the case worth a great deal of attention. He not only used his stethoscope (which had not become a matter of course in practice at that time), but sat quietly by his patient and watched him. To Mr. Casaubon's questions about himself, he replied that the source of the illness was the common error of intellectual men—a too eager and monotonous application: the remedy was, to be satisfied with moderate work, and to seek variety of relaxation. Mr. Brooke, who sat by on one occasion, suggested that Mr. Casaubon should go fishing, as Cadwallader did, and have a turning-room, make toys, table-legs, and that kind of thing.

"In short you recommend me to anticipate the arrival of my second childhood," said poor Mr. Casaubon, with some bitterness. "These things," he added, looking at Lydgate, "would be to me such relaxation as tow-picking is to prisoners in a house of correction."

"I confess," said Lydgate, smiling, "amusement is rather an unsatisfactory prescription. It is something like telling people to keep up their spirits. Perhaps I had better say, that you must submit to be mildly bored rather than to go on working."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Brooke. "Get Dorothea to play backgammon with you in the evenings. And shuttlecock, now—I don't know a finer game than shuttlecock for the daytime. I remember it all the fashion. To be sure, your eyes might not stand that, Casaubon. But you must unbend, you know. Why, you might take to some light study: conchology, now: I always think that must be a light study. Or get Dorothea to read you light things, Smollett—'Roderick Random,' 'Humphry Clinker:' they are a little broad, but she may read anything now she's married, you know. I remember they made me laugh uncommonly—there's a droll bit about a postilion's breeches. We have no such humour now. I have gone through all these things, but they might be rather new to you."

"As new as eating thistles," would have been an answer to represent Mr. Casaubon's feelings. But he only bowed resignedly, with due respect to his wife's uncle, and observed that doubtless the works he mentioned had "served as a resource to a certain order of minds."

"You see," said the able magistrate to Lydgate, when they were outside the door, "Casaubon has been a little narrow: it leaves him rather at a loss when you forbid him his particular work, which I believe is something very deep indeed—in the line of research, you know. I would never give way to that; I was always versatile. But a clergyman is tied a little tight. If they would make him a bishop, now!—he did a very good pamphlet for Peel. He would have more movement then, more show; he might get a little flesh. But I recommend you to talk to Mrs. Casaubon. She is clever enough for anything, is my niece. Tell her, her husband wants liveliness, diversion: put her on amusing tactics."

Without Mr. Brooke's advice, Lydgate had determined on speaking to Dorothea. She had not been present while her uncle was throwing out his pleasant suggestions as to the mode in which life at Lowick might be enlivened, but she was usually by her husband's side, and the unaffected signs of intense anxiety in her face and voice about whatever touched his mind or health, made a drama which Lydgate was inclined to watch. He said to himself that he was only doing right in telling her the truth about her husband's probable future, but he certainly thought also that it would be interesting to talk confidentially with her. A medical man likes to make psychological observations, and sometimes in the pursuit of such studies is too easily tempted into momentous prophecy which life and death easily set at nought. Lydgate had often been satirical on this gratuitous prediction, and he meant now to be guarded.

He asked for Mrs. Casaubon, but being told that she was out walking, he was going away, when Dorothea and Celia appeared, both glowing from their struggle with the March wind. When Lydgate begged to speak with her alone, Dorothea opened the library door which happened to be the nearest, thinking of nothing at the moment but what he might have to say about Mr. Casaubon. It was the first time she had entered this room since her husband had been taken ill, and the servant had chosen not to open the shutters. But there was light enough to read by from the narrow upper panes of the windows.

"You will not mind this sombre light," said Dorothea, standing in the middle of the room. "Since you forbade books, the library has been out of the question. But Mr. Casaubon will soon be here again, I hope. Is he not making progress?"

"Yes, much more rapid progress than I at first expected. Indeed, he is already nearly in his usual state of health."

"You do not fear that the illness will return?" said Dorothea, whose quick ear had detected some significance in Lydgate's tone.

"Such cases are peculiarly difficult to pronounce upon," said Lydgate. "The only point on which I can be confident is that it will be desirable to be very watchful on Mr. Casaubon's account lest he should in any way strain his nervous power."

"I beseech you to speak quite plainly," said Dorothea, in an imploring tone. "I cannot bear to think that there might be something which I did not know, and which, if I had known it, would have made me act differently." The words came out like a cry: it was evident that they were the voice of some mental experience which lay not very far off.

"Sit down," she added, placing herself on the nearest chair, and throwing off her bonnet and gloves, with an instinctive discarding of formality where a great question of destiny was concerned.

"What you say now justifies my own view," said Lydgate. "I think it is one's function as a medical man to hinder regrets of that sort as far as possible. But I beg you to observe that Mr. Casaubon's case is precisely of the kind in which the issue is most difficult to pronounce upon. He may possibly live for fifteen years or more, without much worse health than he has had hitherto."

Dorothea had turned very pale, and when Lydgate paused she said in a low voice, "You mean if we are very careful."

"Yes—careful against mental agitation of all kinds, and against excessive application."

"He would be miserable, if he had to give up his work," said Dorothea, with a quick prevision of that wretchedness.

"I am aware of that. The only course is to try by all means, direct and indirect, to moderate and vary his occupations. With a happy concurrence of circumstances, there is, as I said, no immediate danger from that affection of the heart which I believe to have been the cause of his late attack. On the other hand, it is possible that the disease may develop itself more rapidly: it is one of those cases in which death is sometimes sudden. Nothing should be neglected which might be affected by such an issue."

There was silence for a few moments, while Dorothea sat as if she had been turned to marble, though the life within her was so intense that her mind had never before swept in brief time over an equal range of scenes and motives.

"Help me, pray," she said, at last, in the same low voice as before. "Tell me what I can do."

"What do you think of foreign travel? You have been lately in Rome, I think."

The memories which made this resource utterly hopeless were a new current that shook Dorothea out of her pallid immobility.

"Oh, that would not do—that would be worse than anything," she said with a more childlike despondency, while the tears rolled down. "Nothing will be of any use that he does not enjoy."

"I wish that I could have spared you this pain," said Lydgate, deeply touched, yet wondering about her marriage. Women just like Dorothea had not entered into his traditions.

"It was right of you to tell me. I thank you for telling me the truth."

"I wish you to understand that I shall not say anything to enlighten Mr. Casaubon himself. I think it desirable for him to know nothing more than that he must not overwork himself, and must observe certain rules. Anxiety of any kind would be precisely the most unfavourable condition for him."

Lydgate rose, and Dorothea mechanically rose at the same time, unclasping her cloak and throwing it off as if it stifled her. He was bowing and quitting her, when an impulse which if she had been alone would have turned into a prayer, made her say with a sob in her voice—

"Oh, you are a wise man, are you not? You know all about life and death. Advise me. Think what I can do. He has been labouring all his life and looking forward. He minds about nothing else. And I mind about nothing else—"

For years after Lydgate remembered the impression produced in him by this involuntary appeal—this cry from soul to soul, without other consciousness than their moving with kindred natures in the same embroiled medium, the same troublous fitfully-illuminated life. But what could he say now except that he should see Mr. Casaubon again to-morrow?

When he was gone, Dorothea's tears gushed forth, and relieved her stifling oppression. Then she dried her eyes, reminded that her distress must not be betrayed to her husband; and looked round the room thinking that she must order the servant to attend to it as usual, since Mr. Casaubon might now at any moment wish to enter. On his writing-table there were letters which had lain untouched since the morning when he was taken ill, and among them, as Dorothea well remembered, there were young Ladislaw's letters, the one addressed to her still unopened. The associations of these letters had been made the more painful by that sudden attack of illness which she felt that the agitation caused by her anger might have helped to bring on: it would be time enough to read them when they were again thrust upon her, and she had had no inclination to fetch them from the library. But now it occurred to her that they should be put out of her husband's sight: whatever might have been the sources of his annoyance about them, he must, if possible, not be annoyed again; and she ran her eyes first over the letter addressed to him to assure herself whether or not it would be necessary to write in order to hinder the offensive visit.

Will wrote from Rome, and began by saying that his obligations to Mr. Casaubon were too deep for all thanks not to seem impertinent. It was plain that if he were not grateful, he must be the poorest-spirited rascal who had ever found a generous friend. To expand in wordy thanks would be like saying, "I am honest." But Will had come to perceive that his defects—defects which Mr. Casaubon had himself often pointed to—needed for their correction that more strenuous position which his relative's generosity had hitherto prevented from being inevitable. He trusted that he should make the best return, if return were possible, by showing the effectiveness of the education for which he was indebted, and by ceasing in future to need any diversion towards himself of funds on which others might have a better claim. He was coming to England to try his fortune, as many other young men were obliged to do whose only capital was in their brains. His friend Naumann had desired him to take charge of the "Dispute"—the picture painted for Mr. Casaubon, with whose permission, and Mrs. Casaubon's, Will would convey it to Lowick in person. A letter addressed to the Poste Restante in Paris within the fortnight would hinder him, if necessary, from arriving at an inconvenient moment. He enclosed a letter to Mrs. Casaubon in which he continued a discussion about art, begun with her in Rome.

Opening her own letter Dorothea saw that it was a lively continuation of his remonstrance with her fanatical sympathy and her want of sturdy neutral delight in things as they were—an outpouring of his young vivacity which it was impossible to read just now. She had immediately to consider what was to be done about the other letter: there was still time perhaps to prevent Will from coming to Lowick. Dorothea ended by giving the letter to her uncle, who was still in the house, and begging him to let Will know that Mr. Casaubon had been ill, and that his health would not allow the reception of any visitors.

No one more ready than Mr. Brooke to write a letter: his only difficulty was to write a short one, and his ideas in this case expanded over the three large pages and the inward foldings. He had simply said to Dorothea—

"To be sure, I will write, my dear. He's a very clever young fellow—this young Ladislaw—I daresay will be a rising young man. It's a good letter—marks his sense of things, you know. However, I will tell him about Casaubon."

But the end of Mr. Brooke's pen was a thinking organ, evolving sentences, especially of a benevolent kind, before the rest of his mind could well overtake them. It expressed regrets and proposed remedies, which, when Mr. Brooke read them, seemed felicitously worded—surprisingly the right thing, and determined a sequel which he had never before thought of. In this case, his pen found it such a pity that young Ladislaw should not have come into the neighbourhood just at that time, in order that Mr. Brooke might make his acquaintance more fully, and that they might go over the long-neglected Italian drawings together—it also felt such an interest in a young man who was starting in life with a stock of ideas—that by the end of the second page it had persuaded Mr. Brooke to invite young Ladislaw, since he could not be received at Lowick, to come to Tipton Grange. Why not? They could find a great many things to do together, and this was a period of peculiar growth—the political horizon was expanding, and—in short, Mr. Brooke's pen went off into a little speech which it had lately reported for that imperfectly-edited organ the "Middlemarch Pioneer." While Mr. Brooke was sealing this letter, he felt elated with an influx of dim projects:—a young man capable of putting ideas into form the "Pioneer" purchased to clear the pathway for a new candidate, documents utilised—who knew what might come of it all? Since Celia was going to marry immediately, it would be very pleasant to have a young fellow at table with him, at least for a time.

But he went away without telling Dorothea what he had put into the letter, for she was engaged with her husband, and—in fact, these things were of no importance to her.

CHAPTER XXXI

How will you know the pitch of that great bell
Too large for you to stir? Let but a flute
Play 'neath the fine-mixed metal: listen close
Till the right note flows forth, a silvery rill:
Then shall the huge bell tremble—then the mass
With myriad waves concurrent shall respond
In low soft unison.

LYDGATE that evening spoke to Miss Vincy of Mrs. Casaubon, and laid some emphasis on the strong feeling she appeared to have for that formal studious man thirty years older than herself.

"Of course she is devoted to her husband," said Rosamond, implying a notion of necessary sequence which the scientific man regarded as the prettiest possible for a woman; but she was thinking at the same time that it was not so very melancholy to be mistress of Lowick Manor with a husband likely to die soon. "Do you think her very handsome?"

"She certainly is handsome, but I have not thought about it," said Lydgate.

"I suppose it would be unprofessional," said Rosamond, dimpling. "But how your practice is spreading! You were called in before to the Chettams, I think; and now, the Casaubons."

"Yes," said Lydgate, in a tone of compulsory admission. "But I don't really like attending such people so well as the poor. The cases are more monotonous, and one has to go through more fuss and listen more deferentially to nonsense."

"Not more than in Middlemarch," said Rosamond. "And at least you go through wide corridors and have the scent of rose-leaves everywhere."

"That is true, Mademoiselle de Montmorenci," said Lydgate, just bending his head to the table and lifting with his fourth finger her delicate handkerchief which lay at the mouth of her reticule, as if to enjoy its scent, while he looked at her with a smile.

But this agreeable holiday freedom with which Lydgate hovered about the flower of Middlemarch, could not continue indefinitely. It was not more possible to find social isolation in that town than elsewhere, and two people persistently flirting could by no means escape from "the various entanglements, weights, blows, clashings, motions, by which things severally go on." Whatever Miss Vincy did must be remarked, and she was perhaps the more conspicuous to admirers and critics because just now Mrs. Vincy, after some struggle, had gone with Fred to stay a little while at Stone Court, there being no other way of at once gratifying old Featherstone and keeping watch against Mary Garth, who appeared a less tolerable daughter-in-law in proportion as Fred's illness disappeared.

Aunt Bulstrode, for example, came a little oftener into Lowick Gate to see Rosamond, now she was alone. For Mrs. Bulstrode had a true sisterly feeling for her brother; always thinking that he might have married better, but wishing well to the children. Now Mrs. Bulstrode had a long-standing intimacy with Mrs. Plymdale. They had nearly the same preferences in silks, patterns for underclothing, china-ware, and clergymen; they confided their little troubles of health and household management to each other, and various little points of superiority on Mrs. Bulstrode's side, namely, more decided seriousness, more admiration for mind, and a house outside the town, sometimes served to give colour to their conversation without dividing them: well-meaning women both, knowing very little of their own motives.

Mrs. Bulstrode, paying a morning visit to Mrs. Plymdale, happened to say that she could not stay longer, because she was going to see poor Rosamond.

"Why do you say 'poor Rosamond'?" said Mrs. Plymdale, a round-eyed sharp little woman, like a tamed falcon.

"She is so pretty, and has been brought up in such thoughtlessness. The mother, you know, had always that levity about her which makes me anxious for the children."

"Well, Harriet, if I am to speak my mind," said Mrs. Plymdale, with emphasis, "I must say, anybody would suppose you and Mr. Bulstrode would be delighted with what has happened, for you have done everything to put Mr. Lydgate forward."

"Selina, what do you mean?" said Mrs. Bulstrode in genuine surprise.

"Not but what I am truly thankful for Ned's sake," said Mrs. Plymdale. "He could certainly better afford to keep such a wife than some people can; but I should wish him to look elsewhere. Still a mother has anxieties, and some young men would take to a bad life in consequence. Besides, if I was obliged to speak, I should say I was not fond of strangers coming into a town."

"I don't know, Selina," said Mrs. Bulstrode, with a little emphasis in her turn. "Mr. Bulstrode was a stranger here at one time. Abraham and Moses were strangers in the land, and we are told to entertain strangers. And especially," she added, after a slight pause, "when they are unexceptionable."

"I was not speaking in a religious sense, Harriet. I spoke as a mother."

"Selina, I am sure you have never heard me say anything against a niece of mine marrying your son."

"Oh, it is pride in Miss Vincy—I am sure it is nothing else," said Mrs. Plymdale, who had never before given all her confidence to "Harriet" on this subject. "No young man in Middlemarch was good enough for her: I have heard her mother say as much. That is not a Christian spirit, I think. But now, from all I hear, she has found a man as proud as herself."

"You don't mean that there is anything between Rosamond and Mr. Lydgate?" said Mrs. Bulstrode, rather mortified at finding out her own ignorance.

"Is it possible you don't know, Harriet?"

"Oh, I go about so little; and I am not fond of gossip; I really never hear any. You see so many people that I don't see. Your circle is rather different from ours."

"Well, but your own niece and Mr. Bulstrode's great favourite—and yours too, I am sure, Harriet! I thought, at one time, you meant him for Kate, when she is a little older."

"I don't believe there can be anything serious at present," said Mrs. Bulstrode. "My brother would certainly have told me."

"Well, people have different ways, but I understand that nobody can see Miss Vincy and Mr. Lydgate together without taking them to be engaged. However, it is not my business. Shall I put up the pattern of mittens?"

After this Mrs. Bulstrode drove to her niece with a mind newly weighted. She was herself handsomely dressed, but she noticed with a little more regret than usual that Rosamond, who was just come in and met her in walking-dress, was almost as expensively equipped. Mrs. Bulstrode was a feminine, smaller edition of her brother, and had none of her husband's low-toned pallor. She had a good honest glance and used no circumlocution.

"You are alone, I see, my dear," she said, as they entered the drawing-room together, looking round gravely. Rosamond felt sure that her aunt had something particular to say, and they sat down near each other. Nevertheless, the quilling inside

Rosamond's bonnet was so charming that it was impossible not to desire the same kind of thing for Kate, and Mrs. Bulstrode's eyes, which were rather fine, rolled round that ample quilled circuit, while she spoke.

"I have just heard something about you that has surprised me very much, Rosamond."

"What is that, aunt?" Rosamond's eyes also were roaming over her aunt's large embroidered collar.

"I can hardly believe it—that you should be engaged without my knowing it—without your father's telling me." Here Mrs. Bulstrode's eyes finally rested on Rosamond's, who blushed deeply, and said—

"I am not engaged, aunt."

"How is it that every one says so, then—that it is the town's talk?"

"The town's talk is of very little consequence, I think," said Rosamond, inwardly gratified.

"Oh, my dear, be more thoughtful; don't despise your neighbours so. Remember you are turned twenty-two now, and you will have no fortune: your father, I am sure, will not be able to spare you anything. Mr. Lydgate is very intellectual and clever; I know there is an attraction in that. I like talking to such men myself; and your uncle finds him very useful. But the profession is a poor one here. To be sure, this life is not everything; but it is seldom a medical man has true religious views—there is too much pride of intellect. And you are not fit to marry a poor man."

"Mr. Lydgate is not a poor man, aunt. He has very high connections."

"He told me himself he was poor."

"That is because he is used to people who have a high style of living."

"My dear Rosamond, *you* must not think of living in high style."

Rosamond looked down and played with her reticule. She was not a fiery young lady and had no sharp answers, but she meant to live as she pleased.

"Then it is really true?" said Mrs. Bulstrode, looking very earnestly at her niece. "You are thinking of Mr. Lydgate: there is some understanding between you, though your father doesn't know. Be open, my dear Rosamond: Mr. Lydgate has really made you an offer?"

Poor Rosamond's feelings were very unpleasant. She had been quite easy as to Lydgate's feeling and intention, but now when her aunt put this question she did not like being unable to say Yes. Her pride was hurt, but her habitual control of manner helped her.

"Pray excuse me, aunt. I would rather not speak on the subject."

"You would not give your heart to a man without a decided prospect, I trust, my dear. And think of the two excellent offers I know of that you have refused!—and one still within your reach, if you will not throw it away. I knew a very great beauty who married badly at last, by doing so. Mr. Ned Plymdale is a nice young man—some might think good-looking; and an only son; and a large business of that kind is better than a profession. Not that marrying is everything. I would have you seek first the kingdom of God. But a girl should keep her heart within her own power."

"I should never give it to Mr. Ned Plymdale, if it were. I have already refused him. If I loved, I should love at once and without change," said Rosamond, with a great sense of being a romantic heroine, and playing the part prettily.

"I see how it is, my dear," said Mrs. Bulstrode, in a melancholy voice, rising to go. "You have allowed your affections to be engaged without return."

"No, indeed, aunt," said Rosamond, with emphasis.

"Then you are quite confident that Mr. Lydgate has a serious attachment to you?"

Rosamond's cheeks by this time were persistently burning, and she felt much mortification. She chose to be silent, and her aunt went away all the more convinced.

Mr. Bulstrode in things worldly and indifferent was disposed to do what his wife bade him, and she now, without telling her reasons, desired him on the next opportunity to find out in conversation with Mr. Lydgate whether he had any intention of marrying soon. The result was a decided negative. Mr. Bulstrode, on being cross-questioned, showed that Lydgate had spoken as no man would who had any attachment that could issue in matrimony. Mrs. Bulstrode now felt that she had a serious duty before her, and she soon managed to arrange a *tête-à-tête* with Lydgate, in which she passed from inquiries about Fred Vincy's health, and expressions of her sincere anxiety for her brother's large family, to general remarks on the dangers which lay before young people with regard to their settlement in life. Young men were often wild and disappointing, making little return for the money spent on them, and a girl was exposed to many circumstances which might interfere with her prospects.

"Especially when she has great attractions, and her parents see much company," said Mrs. Bulstrode. "Gentlemen pay her attention, and engross her all to themselves, for the mere pleasure of the moment, and that drives off others. I think it is a heavy responsibility, Mr. Lydgate, to interfere with the prospects of any girl." Here Mrs. Bulstrode fixed her eyes on him, with an unmistakable purpose of warning, if not of rebuke.

"Clearly," said Lydgate, looking at her—perhaps even staring a little in return. "On the other hand, a man must be a great coxcomb to go about with a notion that he must not pay attention to a young lady lest she should fall in love with him, or lest others should think she must."

"Oh, Mr. Lydgate, you know well what your advantages are. You know that our young men here cannot cope with you. Where you frequent a house it may militate very much against a girl's making a desirable settlement in life, and prevent her from accepting offers even if they are made."

Lydgate was less flattered by his advantage over the Middlemarch Orlandos than he was annoyed by the perception of Mrs. Bulstrode's meaning. She felt that she had spoken as impressively as it was necessary to do, and that in using the superior word "militate" she had thrown a noble drapery over a mass of particulars which were still evident enough.

Lydgate was fuming a little, pushed his hair back with one hand, felt curiously in his waistcoat-pocket with the other, and then stooped to beckon the tiny black spaniel, which had the insight to decline his hollow caresses. It would not have been decent to go away, because he had been dining with other guests, and had just taken tea. But Mrs. Bulstrode, having no doubt that she had been understood, turned the conversation.

Solomon's Proverbs, I think, have omitted to say, that as the sore palate findeth grit, so an uneasy consciousness heareth innuendoes. The next day Mr. Farebrother, parting from Lydgate in the street, supposed that they should meet at Vincy's in the evening. Lydgate answered curtly, no—he had work to do—he must give up going out in the evening.

"What, you are going to get lashed to the mast, eh, and are stopping your ears?" said the Vicar. "Well, if you don't mean to be won by the sirens, you are right to take precautions in time."

A few days before, Lydgate would have taken no notice of these words as anything more than the Vicar's usual way of putting things. They seemed now to convey an innuendo which confirmed the impression that he had been making a fool of himself and behaving so as to be misunderstood: not, he believed, by Rosamond herself; she, he felt sure, took everything as lightly as he intended it. She had an exquisite tact and insight in relation to all points of manners; but the people she lived among were blunderers and busybodies. However, the mistake should go no farther. He resolved—and kept his resolution—that he would not go to Mr. Vincy's except on business.

Rosamond became very unhappy. The uneasiness first stirred by her aunt's questions grew and grew till at the end of ten days that she had not seen Lydgate, it grew into terror at the blank that might possibly come—into foreboding of that ready, fatal sponge which so cheaply wipes out the hopes of mortals. The world would have a new dreariness for her, as a wilderness that a magician's spells had turned for a little while into a garden. She felt that she was beginning to know the pang of disappointed love, and that no other man could be the occasion of such delightful aerial building as she had been enjoying for the last six months. Poor Rosamond lost her appetite and felt as forlorn as Ariadne—as a charming stage Ariadne left behind with all her boxes full of costumes and no hope of a coach.

There are many wonderful mixtures in the world which are all alike called love, and claim the privileges of a sublime rage which is an apology for everything (in literature and the drama). Happily Rosamond did not think of committing any desperate act: she plaited her fair hair as beautifully as usual, and kept herself proudly calm. Her most cheerful supposition was that her aunt Bulstrode had interfered in some way to hinder Lydgate's visits: everything was better than a spontaneous indifference in him. Any one who imagines ten days too short a time—not for falling into leanness, lightness, or other measurable effects of passion, but—for the whole spiritual circuit of alarmed conjecture and disappointment, is ignorant of what can go on in the elegant leisure of a young lady's mind.

On the eleventh day, however, Lydgate when leaving Stone Court was requested by Mrs. Vincy to let her husband know that there was a marked change in Mr. Featherstone's health, and that she wished him to come to Stone Court on that day.

Now Lydgate might have called at the warehouse, or might have written a message on a leaf of his pocket-book and left it at the door. Yet these simple devices apparently did not occur to him, from which we may conclude that he had no strong objection to calling at the house at an hour when Mr. Vincy was not at home, and leaving the message with Miss Vincy. A man may, from various motives, decline to give his company, but perhaps not even a sage would be gratified that nobody missed him. It would be a graceful, easy way of piecing on the new habits to the old, to have a few playful words with Rosamond about his resistance to dissipation, and his firm resolve to take long fasts even from sweet sounds. It must be confessed, also, that momentary speculations as to all the possible grounds for Mrs. Bulstrode's hints had managed to get woven like slight clinging hairs into the more substantial web of his thoughts.

Miss Vincy was alone, and blushed so deeply when Lydgate came in that he felt a corresponding embarrassment, and instead of any playfulness, he began at once to speak of his reason for calling, and to beg her, almost formally, to deliver the message to her father. Rosamond, who at the first moment felt as if her happiness were returning, was keenly hurt by Lydgate's manner; her blush had departed, and she assented coldly, without adding an unnecessary word, some trivial chain-work which she had in her hands enabling her to avoid looking at Lydgate higher than his chin. In all failures, the beginning is certainly the half of the whole. After sitting two long moments while he moved his whip and could say nothing, Lydgate rose to go, and Rosamond, made nervous by her struggle between mortification and the wish not to betray it, dropped her chain as if startled, and rose too, mechanically. Lydgate instantaneously stooped to pick up the chain. When he rose he was very near to a lovely little face set on a fair long neck which he had been used to see turning about under the most perfect management of self-contented grace. But as he raised his eyes now he saw a certain helpless quivering which touched him quite newly, and made him look at Rosamond with a questioning flash. At this moment she was as natural as she had ever been when she was five years old: she felt that her tears had risen, and it was no use to try to do anything else than let them stay like water on a blue flower or let them fall over her cheeks, even as they would.

That moment of naturalness was the crystallising feather-touch: it shook flirtation into love. Remember that the ambitious man who was looking at those Forget-me-nots under the water was very warmhearted and rash. He did not know where the chain went; an idea had thrilled through the recesses within him which had a miraculous effect in raising the power of passionate love lying buried there in no sealed sepulchre, but under the lightest, easily pierced mould. His words were quite abrupt and awkward; but the tone made them sound like an ardent, appealing avowal.

"What is the matter? you are distressed. Tell me—pray."

Rosamond had never been spoken to in such tones before. I am not sure that she knew what the words were; but she looked at Lydgate and the tears fell over her cheeks. There could have been no more complete answer than that silence, and Lydgate, forgetting everything else, completely mastered by the outrush of tenderness at the sudden belief that this sweet young creature depended on him for her joy, actually put his arms round her, folding her gently and protectingly—he was used to being gentle with the weak and suffering—and kissed each of the two large tears. This was a strange way of arriving at an understanding, but it was a short way. Rosamond was not angry, but she moved backward a little in timid happiness, and Lydgate could now sit near her and speak less incompletely. Rosamond had to make her little confession, and he poured out words of gratitude and tenderness with impulsive lavishment. In half an hour he left the house an engaged man, whose soul was not his own, but the woman's to whom he had bound himself.

He came again in the evening to speak with Mr. Vincy, who, just returned from Stone Court, was feeling sure that it would not be long before he heard of Mr. Featherstone's demise. The felicitous word "demise," which had seasonably occurred to him, had raised his spirits even above their usual evening pitch. The right word is always a power, and communicates its definiteness to our action. Considered as a demise, old Featherstone's death assumed a merely legal aspect, so that Mr. Vincy could tap his snuff-box over it and be jovial, without even an intermittent affectation of solemnity; and Mr. Vincy hated both solemnity and affectation. Who was ever awe-struck about a testator, or sang a hymn on the title to real property? Mr. Vincy was inclined to take a jovial view of all things that evening: he even observed to Lydgate that Fred had got the family constitution after all, and would soon be as fine a fellow as ever again; and when his approbation of Rosamond's engagement was asked for, he gave it with astonishing facility, passing at once to general remarks on the desirableness of matrimony for young men and maidens, and apparently deducing from the whole the appropriateness of a little more punch.

CHAPTER XXXII

"They'll take suggestion as a cat laps milk."
—SHAKESPEARE: *Tempest.*

THE triumphant confidence of the Mayor founded on Mr. Featherstone's insistent demand that Fred and his mother should not leave him, was a feeble emotion compared with all that was agitating the breasts of the old man's blood-relations, who naturally manifested more their sense of the family tie and were more visibly numerous now that he had become bedridden. Naturally: for when "poor Peter" had occupied his arm-chair in the wainscoated parlour, no assiduous beetles for whom the cook prepares boiling water could have been less welcome on a hearth which they had reasons for preferring, than those persons whose Featherstone blood was ill-nourished, not from penuriousness on their part, but from poverty. Brother Solomon and Sister Jane were rich, and the family candour and total abstinence from false politeness with which they were always received seemed to them no argument that their brother in the solemn act of making his will would overlook the superior claims of wealth. Themselves at least he had never been unnatural enough to banish from his house, and it seemed hardly eccentric that he should have kept away Brother Jonah, Sister Martha, and the rest, who had no shadow of such claims. They knew Peter's maxim, that money was a good egg, and should be laid in a warm nest.

But Brother Jonah, Sister Martha, and all the needy exiles, held a different point of view. Probabilities are as various as the faces to be seen at will in fretwork or paperhangings: every form is there, from Jupiter to Judy, if you only look with creative inclination. To the poorer and least favoured it seemed likely that since Peter had done nothing for them in his life, he would remember them at the last. Jonah argued that men like to make a surprise of their wills, while Martha said that nobody need be surprised if he left the best part of his money to those who least expected it. Also it was not to be thought but that an own brother "lying there" with dropsy in his legs must come to feel that blood was thicker than water, and if he didn't alter his will, he might have money by him. At any rate some blood-relations should be on the premises and on the watch against those who were hardly relations at all. Such things had been known as forged wills and disputed wills, which seemed to have the golden-hazy advantage of somehow enabling non-legatees to live out of them. Again, those who were no blood-relations might be caught making away with things—and poor Peter "lying there" helpless! Somebody should be on the watch. But in this conclusion they were at one with Solomon and Jane; also some nephews, nieces, and cousins, arguing with still greater subtilty as to what might be done by a man able to "will away" his property and give himself large treats of oddity, felt in a handsome sort of way that there was a family interest to be attended to, and thought of Stone Court as a place which it would be nothing but right for them to visit. Sister Martha, otherwise Mrs. Cranch, living with some wheeziness in the Chalky Flats, could not undertake the journey; but her son, as being poor Peter's own nephew, could represent her advantageously, and watch lest his uncle Jonah should make an unfair use of the improbable things which seemed likely to happen. In fact there was a general sense running in the Featherstone blood that everybody must watch everybody else, and that it would be well for everybody else to reflect that the Almighty was watching him.

Thus Stone Court continually saw one or other blood-relation alighting or departing, and Mary Garth had the unpleasant task of carrying their messages to Mr. Featherstone, who would see none of them, and sent her down with the still more unpleasant task of telling them so. As manager of the household she felt bound to ask them in good provincial fashion to stay and eat; but she chose to consult Mrs. Vincy on the point of extra downstairs consumption now that Mr. Featherstone was laid up.

"Oh, my dear, you must do things handsomely where there's last illness and a property. God knows, *I* don't grudge them every ham in the house—only, save the best for the funeral. Have some stuffed veal always, and a fine cheese in cut. You must expect to keep open house in these last illnesses," said liberal Mrs. Vincy, once more of cheerful note and bright plumage.

But some of the visitors alighted and did not depart after the handsome treating to veal and ham. Brother Jonah, for example (there are such unpleasant people in most families; perhaps even in the highest aristocracy there are Brobdingnag specimens, gigantically in debt and bloated at greater expense)—Brother Jonah, I say, having come down in the world, was mainly supported by a calling which he was modest enough not to boast of, though it was much better than swindling either on exchange or turf, but which did not require his presence at Brassing so long as he had a good corner to sit in and a supply of food. He chose the kitchen-corner, partly because he liked it best, and partly because he did not want to sit with Solomon, concerning whom he had a strong brotherly opinion. Seated in a famous arm-chair and in his best suit, constantly within sight of good cheer, he had a comfortable consciousness of being on the premises, mingled with fleeting suggestions of Sunday and the bar at the Green Man; and he informed Mary Garth that he should not go out of reach of his brother Peter while that poor fellow was above ground. The troublesome ones in a family are usually either the wits or the idiots. Jonah was the wit among the Featherstones, and joked with the maid-servants when they came about the hearth, but seemed to consider Miss Garth a suspicious character, and followed her with cold eyes.

Mary would have borne this one pair of eyes with comparative ease, but unfortunately there was young Cranch, who, having come all the way from the Chalky Flats to represent his mother and watch his uncle Jonah, also felt it his duty to stay and to sit chiefly in the kitchen to give his uncle company. Young Cranch was not exactly the balancing point between the wit and the idiot,—verging slightly towards the latter type, and squinting so as to leave everything in doubt about his sentiments except that they were not of a forcible character. When Mary Garth entered the kitchen and Mr. Jonah Featherstone began to follow her with his cold detective eyes, young Cranch turning his head in the same direction seemed to insist on it that she should remark how he was squinting, as if he did it with design, like the gypsies when Borrow read the New Testament to them. This was rather too much for poor Mary; sometimes it made her bilious, sometimes it upset her gravity. One day that she had an opportunity she could not resist describing the kitchen scene to Fred, who would not be hindered from immediately going to see it, affecting simply to pass through. But no sooner did he face the four eyes than he had to rush through the nearest door, which happened to lead to the dairy, and there under the high roof and among the pans he gave way to laughter which made a hollow resonance perfectly audible in the kitchen. He fled by another doorway, but Mr. Jonah, who had not before seen Fred's white complexion, long legs, and pinched delicacy of face, prepared many sarcasms in which these points of appearance were wittily combined with the lowest moral attributes.

"Why, Tom, *you* don't wear such gentlemanly trousers—*you* haven't got half such fine long legs," said Jonah to his nephew, winking at the same time, to imply that there was something more in these statements than their undeniableness. Tom looked at his legs, but left it uncertain whether he preferred his moral advantages to a more vicious length of limb and reprehensible gentility of trouser.

In the large wainscoated parlour too there were constantly pairs of eyes on the watch, and own relatives eager to be "sitters-up." Many came, lunched, and departed, but Brother Solomon and the lady who had been Jane Featherstone for twenty-five years before she was Mrs. Waule found it good to be there every day for hours, without other calculable occupation than that of observing the cunning Mary Garth (who was so deep that she could be found out in nothing) and giving occasional dry wrinkly indications of crying—as if capable of torrents in a wetter season—at the thought that they were not allowed to go into Mr. Featherstone's room. For the old man's dislike of his own family seemed to get stronger as he got less able to amuse himself by saying biting things to them. Too languid to sting, he had the more venom refluent in his blood.

Not fully believing the message sent through Mary Garth, they had presented themselves together within the door of the bedroom, both in black—Mrs. Waule having a white handkerchief partially unfolded in her hand—and both with faces in a sort of half-mourning purple; while Mrs. Vincy with her pink cheeks and pink ribbons flying was actually administering a cordial to their own brother, and the light-complexioned Fred, his short hair curling as might be expected in a gambler's, was lolling at his ease in a large chair.

Old Featherstone no sooner caught sight of these funereal figures appearing in spite of his orders than rage came to strengthen him more successfully than the cordial. He was propped up on a bed-rest, and always had his gold-headed stick lying by him. He seized it now and swept it backwards and forwards in as large an area as he could, apparently to ban these ugly spectres, crying in a hoarse sort of screech—

"Back, back, Mrs. Waule! Back, Solomon!"

"Oh, brother Peter," Mrs. Waule began—but Solomon put his hand before her repressingly. He was a large-cheeked man, nearly seventy, with small furtive eyes, and was not only of much blander temper but thought himself much deeper than his brother Peter; indeed not likely to be deceived in any of his fellow-men, inasmuch as they could not well be more greedy and deceitful than he suspected them of being. Even the invisible powers, he thought, were likely to be soothed by a bland parenthesis here and there—coming from a man of property, who might have been as impious as others.

"Brother Peter," he said, in a wheedling yet gravely official tone, "it's nothing but right I should speak to you about the Three Crofts and the Manganese. The Almighty knows what I've got on my mind . . ."

"Then He knows more than I want to know," said Peter, laying down his stick with a show of truce which had a threat in it too, for he reversed the stick so as to make the gold handle a club in case of closer fighting, and looked hard at Solomon's bald head.

"There's things you might repent of, Brother, for want of speaking to me," said Solomon, not advancing, however. "I could sit up with you to-night, and Jane with me, willingly, and you might take your own time to speak, or let me speak."

"Yes, I shall take my own time—you needn't offer me yours," said Peter.

"But you can't take your own time to die in, Brother," began Mrs. Waule, with her usual woolly tone. "And when you lie speechless you may be tired of having strangers about you, and you may think of me and my children"——but here her voice broke under the touching thought which she was attributing to her speechless brother; the mention of ourselves being naturally affecting.

"No, I shan't," said old Featherstone, contradictiously. "I shan't think of any of you. I've made my will, I tell you, I've made my will." Here he turned his head towards Mrs. Vincy, and swallowed some more of his cordial.

"Some people would be ashamed to fill up a place belonging by rights to others," said Mrs. Waule, turning her narrow eyes in the same direction.

"Oh, sister," said Solomon, with ironical softness, "you and me are not fine, and handsome, and clever enough: we must be humble and let smart people push themselves before us."

Fred's spirit could not bear this: rising and looking at Mr. Featherstone, he said, "Shall my mother and I leave the room, sir, that you may be alone with your friends?"

"Sit down, I tell you," said old Featherstone, snappishly. "Stop where you are. Good-bye, Solomon," he added, trying to wield his stick again, but failing now that he had reversed the handle. "Good-bye, Mrs. Waule. Don't you come again."

"I shall be downstairs, Brother, whether or no," said Solomon. "I shall do *my* duty, and it remains to be seen what the Almighty will allow."

"Yes, in property going out of families," said Mrs. Waule, in continuation,—"and where there's steady young men to carry on. But I pity them who are not such, and I pity their mothers. Good-bye, Brother Peter."

"Remember, I'm the eldest after you, Brother, and prospered from the first, just as you did, and have got land already by the name of Featherstone," said Solomon, relying much on that reflection, as one which might be suggested in the watches of the night. "But I bid you good-bye for the present."

Their exit was hastened by their seeing old Mr. Featherstone pull his wig on each side and shut his eyes with his mouth-widening grimace, as if he were determined to be deaf and blind.

None the less they came to Stone Court daily and sat below at the post of duty, sometimes carrying on a slow dialogue in an undertone in which the observation and response were so far apart, that any one hearing them might have imagined himself listening to speaking automata, in some doubt whether the ingenious mechanism would really work, or wind itself up for a long time in order to stick and be silent. Solomon and Jane would have been sorry to be quick: what that led to might be seen on the other side of the wall in the person of Brother Jonah.

But their watch in the wainscoated parlour was sometimes varied by the presence of other guests from far or near. Now that Peter Featherstone was upstairs, his property could be discussed with all that local enlightenment to be found on the spot: some rural and Middlemarch neighbours expressed much agreement with the family and sympathy with their interest against the Vincys, and feminine visitors were even moved to tears, in conversation with Mrs. Waule, when they recalled the fact that they themselves had been disappointed in times past by codicils and marriages for spite on the part of ungrateful elderly gentlemen, who, it might have been supposed, had been spared for something better. Such conversation paused suddenly, like an organ when the bellows are let drop, if Mary

Garth came into the room; and all eyes were turned on her as a possible legatee, or one who might get access to iron chests.

But the younger men who were relatives or connections of the family, were disposed to admire her in this problematic light, as a girl who showed much conduct, and who among all the chances that were flying might turn out to be at least a moderate prize. Hence she had her share of compliments and polite attentions.

Especially from Mr. Borthrop Trumbull, a distinguished bachelor and auctioneer of those parts, much concerned in the sale of land and cattle: a public character, indeed, whose name was seen on widely-distributed placards, and who might reasonably be sorry for those who did not know of him. He was second cousin to Peter Featherstone, and had been treated by him with more amenity than any other relative, being useful in matters of business; and in that programme of his funeral which the old man had himself dictated, he had been named as a Bearer. There was no odious cupidity in Mr. Borthrop Trumbull—nothing more than a sincere sense of his own merit, which, he was aware, in case of rivalry might tell against competitors; so that if Peter Featherstone, who so far as he, Trumbull, was concerned, had behaved like as good a soul as ever breathed, should have done anything handsome by him, all he could say was, that he had never fished and fawned, but had advised him to the best of his experience, which now extended over twenty years from the time of his apprenticeship at fifteen, and was likely to yield a knowledge of no surreptitious kind. His admiration was far from being confined to himself, but was accustomed professionally as well as privately to delight in estimating things at a high rate. He was an amateur of superior phrases, and never used poor language without immediately correcting himself—which was fortunate, as he was rather loud, and given to predominate, standing or walking about frequently, pulling down his waistcoat with the air of a man who is very much of his own opinion, trimming himself rapidly with his fore-finger, and marking each new series in these movements by a busy play with his large seals. There was occasionally a little fierceness in his demeanour, but it was directed chiefly against false opinion, of which there is so much to correct in the world that a man of some reading and experience necessarily has his patience tried. He felt that the Featherstone family generally was of limited understanding, but being a man of the world and a public character, took everything as a matter of course, and even went to converse with Mr. Jonah and young Cranch in the kitchen, not doubting that he had impressed the latter greatly by his leading questions concerning the Chalky Flats. If anybody had observed that Mr. Borthrop Trumbull, being an auctioneer, was bound to know the nature of everything, he would have smiled and trimmed himself silently with the sense that he came pretty near that. On the whole, in an auctioneering way, he was an honourable man, not ashamed of his business, and feeling that "the celebrated Peel, now Sir Robert," if introduced to him, would not fail to recognise his importance.

"I don't mind if I have a slice of that ham, and a glass of that ale, Miss Garth, if you will allow me," he said, coming into the parlour at half-past eleven, after having had the exceptional privilege of seeing old Featherstone, and standing with his back to the fire between Mrs. Waule and Solomon. "It's not necessary for you to go out;—let me ring the bell."

"Thank you," said Mary, "I have an errand."

"Well, Mr. Trumbull, you're highly favoured," said Mrs. Waule.

"What, seeing the old man?" said the auctioneer, playing with his seals dispassionately. "Ah, you see he has relied on me considerably." Here he pressed his lips together, and frowned meditatively.

"Might anybody ask what their brother has been saying?" said Solomon, in a soft tone of humility, in which he had a sense of luxurious cunning, he being a rich man and not in need of it.

"Oh yes, anybody may ask," said Mr. Trumbull, with loud and good-humoured though cutting sarcasm. "Anybody may interrogate. Any one may give their remarks an interrogative turn," he continued, his sonorousness rising with his style. "This is constantly done by good speakers, even when they anticipate no answer. It is what we call a figure of speech—speech at a high figure, as one may say." The eloquent auctioneer smiled at his own ingenuity.

"I shouldn't be sorry to hear he'd remembered *you*, Mr. Trumbull," said Solomon. "I never was against the deserving. It's the undeserving I'm against."

"Ah, there it is, you see, there it is," said Mr. Trumbull, significantly. "It can't be denied that undeserving people have been legatees, and even residuary legatees. It is so, with testamentary dispositions." Again he pursed up his lips and frowned a little.

"Do you mean to say for certain, Mr. Trumbull, that my brother has left his land away from our family?" said Mrs. Waule, on whom, as an unhopeful woman, those long words had a depressing effect.

"A man might as well turn his land into charity land at once as leave it to some people," observed Solomon, his sister's question having drawn no answer.

"What, Blue-Coat land?" said Mrs. Waule, again. "Oh, Mr. Trumbull, you never can mean to say that. It would be flying in the face of the Almighty that's prospered him."

While Mrs. Waule was speaking, Mr. Borthrop Trumbull walked away from the fireplace towards the window, patrolling with his fore-finger round the inside of his stock, then along his whiskers and the curves of his hair. He now walked to Miss Garth's work-table, opened a book which lay there and read the title aloud with pompous emphasis as if he were offering it for sale:

"'Anne of Geierstein' (pronounced Jeersteen) 'or the Maiden of the Mist, by the Author of Waverley.'" Then turning the page, he began sonorously—"The course of four centuries has well-nigh elapsed since the series of events which are related in the following chapters took place on the Continent." He pronounced the last truly admirable word with the accent on the last syllable, not as unaware of vulgar usage, but feeling that this novel delivery enhanced the sonorous beauty which his reading had given to the whole.

And now the servant came in with the tray, so that the moments for answering Mrs. Waule's question had gone by safely, while she and Solomon, watching Mr. Trumbull's movements, were thinking that high learning interfered sadly with serious affairs. Mr. Borthrop Trumbull really knew nothing about old Featherstone's will; but he could hardly have been brought to declare any ignorance unless he had been arrested for misprision of treason.

"I shall take a mere mouthful of ham and a glass of ale," he said, reassuringly. "As a man with public business, I take a snack when I can. I will back this ham," he added, after swallowing some morsels with alarming haste, "against any ham in the three kingdoms. In my opinion it is better than the hams at Freshitt Hall—and I think I am a tolerable judge."

"Some don't like so much sugar in their hams," said Mrs. Waule. "But my poor brother would always have sugar."

"If any person demands better, he is at liberty to do so; but, God bless me, what an aroma! I should be glad to buy-in that quality, I know. There is some gratification to a gentleman"—here Mr. Trumbull's voice conveyed an emotional remonstrance—"in having this kind of ham set on his table."

He pushed aside his plate, poured out his glass of ale and drew his chair a little forward, profiting by the occasion to look at the inner side of his legs, which he stroked approvingly—Mr. Trumbull having all those less frivolous airs and gestures which distinguish the predominant races of the north.

"You have an interesting work there, I see, Miss Garth," he observed, when Mary re-entered. "It is by the author of 'Waverley': that is Sir Walter Scott. I have bought one of his works myself—a very nice thing, a very superior publication, entitled 'Ivanhoe.' You will not get any writer to beat him in a hurry, I think—he will not, in my opinion, be speedily surpassed. I have just been reading a portion at the commencement of 'Anne of Jeersteen.' It commences well." (Things never began with Mr. Borthrop Trumbull: they always commenced, both in private life and on his handbills.) "You are a reader, I see. Do you subscribe to our Middlemarch library?"

"No," said Mary. "Mr. Fred Vincy brought this book."

"I am a great bookman myself," returned Mr. Trumbull. "I have no less than two hundred volumes in calf, and I flatter myself they are well selected. Also pictures by Murillo, Rubens, Teniers, Titian, Vandyck, and others. I shall be happy to lend you any work you like to mention, Miss Garth."

"I am much obliged," said Mary, hastening away again, "but I have little time for reading."

"I should say my brother has done something for *her* in his will," said Mr. Solomon, in a very low undertone, when she had shut the door behind her, pointing with his head towards the absent Mary.

"His first wife was a poor match for him, though," said Mrs. Waule. "She brought him nothing: and this young woman is only her niece. And very proud. And my brother has always paid her wage."

"A sensible girl though, in my opinion," said Mr. Trumbull, finishing his ale and starting up with an emphatic adjustment of his waistcoat. "I have observed her when she has been mixing medicine in drops. She minds what she is doing, sir. That is a great point in a woman, and a great point for our friend up-stairs, poor dear old soul. A man whose life is of any value should think of his wife as a nurse: that is what I should do, if I married; and I believe I have lived single long enough not to make a mistake in that line. Some men must marry to elevate themselves a little, but when I am in need of that, I hope some one will tell me so—I hope some individual will apprise me of the fact. I wish you good morning, Mrs. Waule. Good morning, Mr. Solomon. I trust we shall meet under less melancholy auspices."

When Mr. Trumbull had departed with a fine bow, Solomon, leaning forward, observed to his sister, "You may depend, Jane, my brother has left that girl a lumping sum."

"Anybody would think so, from the way Mr. Trumbull talks," said Jane. Then, after a pause, "He talks as if my daughters wasn't to be trusted to give drops."

"Auctioneers talk wild," said Solomon. "Not but what Trumbull has made money."

CHAPTER XXXIII

> "Close up his eyes and draw the curtain close;
> And let us all to meditation."
> —*2 Henry VI.*

THAT night after twelve o'clock Mary Garth relieved the watch in Mr. Featherstone's room, and sat there alone through the small hours. She often chose this task, in which she found some pleasure, notwithstanding the old man's testiness whenever he demanded her attentions. There were intervals in which she could sit perfectly still, enjoying the outer stillness and the subdued light. The red fire with its gently audible movement seemed like a solemn existence calmly independent of the petty passions, the imbecile desires, the straining after worthless uncertainties, which were daily moving her contempt. Mary was fond of her own thoughts, and could amuse herself well sitting in twilight with her hands in her lap; for, having early had strong reason to believe that things were not likely to be arranged for her peculiar satisfaction, she wasted no time in astonishment and annoyance at that fact. And she had already come to take life very much as a comedy in which she had a proud, nay, a generous resolution not to act the mean or treacherous part. Mary might have become cynical if she had not had parents whom she honoured, and a well of affectionate gratitude within her, which was all the fuller because she had learned to make no unreasonable claims.

She sat to-night revolving, as she was wont, the scenes of the day, her lips often curling with amusement at the oddities to which her fancy added fresh drollery: people were so ridiculous with their illusions, carrying their fools' caps unawares, thinking their own lies opaque while everybody else's were transparent, making themselves exceptions to everything, as if when all the world looked yellow under a lamp they alone were rosy. Yet there were some illusions under Mary's eyes which were not quite comic to her. She was secretly convinced, though she had no other grounds than her close observation of old Featherstone's nature, that in spite of his fondness for having the Vincys about him, they were as likely to be disappointed as any of the relations whom he kept at a distance. She had a good deal of disdain for Mrs. Vincy's evident alarm lest she and Fred should be alone together, but it did not hinder her from thinking anxiously of the way in which Fred would be affected, if it should turn out that his uncle had left him as poor as ever. She could make a butt of Fred when he was present, but she did not enjoy his follies when he was absent.

Yet she liked her thoughts: a vigorous young mind not overbalanced by passion, finds a good in making acquaintance with life, and watches its own powers with interest. Mary had plenty of merriment within.

Her thought was not veined by any solemnity or pathos about the old man on the bed: such sentiments are easier to affect than to feel about an aged creature whose life is not visibly anything but a remnant of vices. She had always seen the most disagreeable side of Mr. Featherstone: he was not proud of her, and she was only useful to him. To be anxious about a soul that is always snapping at you must be left to the saints of the earth; and Mary was not one of them. She had never returned him a harsh word, and had waited on him faithfully: that was her utmost. Old Featherstone himself was not in the least anxious about his soul, and had declined to see Mr. Tucker on the subject.

To-night he had not once snapped, and for the first hour or two he lay remarkably still, until at last Mary heard him rattling his bunch of keys against the tin box which he always kept in the bed beside him. About three o'clock he said, with remarkable distinctness, "Missy, come here!"

Mary obeyed and found that he had already drawn the tin box from under the clothes, though he usually asked to have this done for him; and he had selected the key. He now unlocked the box, and, drawing from it another key, looked straight at her with eyes that seemed to have recovered all their sharpness and said, "How many of 'em are in the house?"

"You mean of your own relations, sir," said Mary, well used to the old man's way of speech. He nodded slightly and she went on.

"Mr. Jonah Featherstone and young Cranch are sleeping here."

"Oh ay, they stick, do they? and the rest—they come every day, I'll warrant—Solomon and Jane, and all the young uns? They come peeping, and counting and casting up?"

"Not all of them every day. Mr. Solomon and Mrs. Waule are here every day, and the others come often."

The old man listened with a grimace while she spoke, and then said, relaxing his face, "The more fools they. You hearken, Missy. It's three o'clock in the morning, and I've got all my faculties as well as ever I had in my life. I know all my property, and where the money's put out, and everything. And I've made everything ready to change my mind, and do as I like at the last. Do you hear, Missy? I've got my faculties."

"Well, sir?" said Mary, quietly.

He now lowered his tone with an air of deeper cunning. "I've made two wills, and I'm going to burn one. Now you do as I tell you. This is the key of my iron chest, in the closet there. You push well at the side of the brass plate at the top, till it goes like a bolt: then you can put the key in the front lock and turn it. See and do that; and take out the topmost paper—Last Will and Testament—big printed."

"No, sir," said Mary, in a firm voice, "I cannot do that."

"Not do it? I tell you, you must," said the old man, his voice beginning to shake under the shock of this resistance.

"I cannot touch your iron chest or your will. I must refuse to do anything that might lay me open to suspicion."

"I tell you, I'm in my right mind. Shan't I do as I like at the last? I made two wills on purpose. Take the key, I say."

"No, sir, I will not," said Mary, more resolutely still. Her repulsion was getting stronger.

"I tell you, there's no time to lose."

"I cannot help that, sir. I will not let the close of your life soil the beginning of mine. I will not touch your iron chest or your will." She moved to a little distance from the bedside.

The old man paused with a blank stare for a little while, holding the one key erect on the ring; then with an agitated jerk he began to work with his bony left hand at emptying the tin box before him.

"Missy," he began to say, hurriedly, "look here! take the money—the notes and gold—look here—take it—you shall have it all—do as I tell you."

He made an effort to stretch out the key towards her as far as possible, and Mary again retreated.

"I will not touch your key or your money, sir. Pray don't ask me to do it again. If you do, I must go and call your brother."

He let his hand fall, and for the first time in her life Mary saw old Peter Featherstone begin to cry childishly. She said, in as gentle a tone as she could command, "Pray put up your money, sir"; and then went away to her seat by the fire, hoping this would help to convince him that it was useless to say more. Presently he rallied and said eagerly—

"Look here, then. Call the young chap. Call Fred Vincy."

Mary's heart began to beat more quickly. Various ideas rushed through her mind as to what the burning of a second will might imply. She had to make a difficult decision in a hurry.

"I will call him, if you will let me call Mr. Jonah and others with him."

"Nobody else, I say. The young chap. I shall do as I like."

"Wait till broad daylight, sir, when every one is stirring. Or let me call Simmons now, to go and fetch the lawyer. He can be here in less than two hours."

"Lawyer? What do I want with the lawyer? Nobody shall know—I say, nobody shall know. I shall do as I like."

"Let me call some one else, sir," said Mary, persuasively. She did not like her position—alone with the old man, who seemed to show a strange flaring of nervous energy which enabled him to speak again and again without falling into his usual cough; yet she desired not to push unnecessarily the contradiction which agitated him. "Let me, pray, call some one else."

"You let me alone, I say. Look here, Missy. Take the money. You'll never have the chance again. It's pretty nigh two hundred—there's more in the box, and nobody knows how much there was. Take it and do as I tell you."

Mary, standing by the fire, saw its red light falling on the old man, propped up on his pillows and bed-rest, with his bony hand holding out the key, and the money lying on the quilt before him. She never forgot that vision of a man wanting to do as he liked at the last. But the way in which he had put the offer of the money urged her to speak with harder resolution than ever.

"It is of no use, sir. I will not do it. Put up your money. I will not touch your money. I will do anything else I can to comfort you; but I will not touch your keys or your money."

"Anything else—anything else!" said old Featherstone, with hoarse rage, which, as if in a nightmare, tried to be loud, and yet was only just audible. "I want nothing else. You come here—you come here."

Mary approached him cautiously, knowing him too well. She saw him dropping his keys and trying to grasp his stick, while he looked at her like an aged hyena, the muscles of his face getting distorted with the effort of his hand. She paused at a safe distance.

"Let me give you some cordial," she said, quietly, "and try to compose yourself. You will perhaps go to sleep. And to-morrow by daylight you can do as you like."

He lifted the stick, in spite of her being beyond his reach, and threw it with a hard effort which was but impotence. It fell, slipping over the foot of the bed. Mary let it lie, and retreated to her chair by the fire. By-and-by she would go to him with the cordial. Fatigue would make him passive. It was getting towards the chillest moment of the morning, the fire had got low, and she could see through the chink between the moreen window-curtains the light whitened by the blind. Having put some wood on the fire and thrown a shawl over her, she sat down, hoping that Mr. Featherstone might now fall asleep. If she went near him the irritation might be kept up. He had said nothing after throwing the stick, but she had seen him taking his keys again and laying his right hand on the money. He did not put it up, however, and she thought that he was dropping off to sleep.

But Mary herself began to be more agitated by the remembrance of what she had gone through, than she had been by the reality—questioning those acts of hers which had come imperatively and excluded all question in the critical moment.

Presently the dry wood sent out a flame which illuminated every crevice, and Mary saw that the old man was lying quietly with his head turned a little on one side. She went towards him with inaudible steps, and thought that his face looked strangely motionless; but the next moment the movement of the flame communicating itself to all objects made her uncertain. The violent beating of her heart rendered her perceptions so doubtful that even when she touched him and listened for his breathing, she could not trust her conclusions. She went to the window and gently propped aside the curtain and blind, so that the still light of the sky fell on the bed.

The next moment she ran to the bell and rang it energetically. In a very little while there was no longer any doubt that Peter Featherstone was dead, with his right hand clasping the keys, and his left hand lying on the heap of notes and gold.

BOOK IV

THREE LOVE PROBLEMS

CHAPTER XXXIV

1st Gent. Such men as this are feathers, chips, and straws,
Carry no weight, no force.
2nd Gent. But levity
Is causal too, and makes the sum of weight.
For power finds its place in lack of power;
Advance is cession, and the driven ship
May run aground because the helmsman's thought
Lacked force to balance opposites.

It was on a morning of May that Peter Featherstone was buried. In the prosaic neighbourhood of Middlemarch, May was not always warm and sunny, and on this particular morning a chill wind was blowing the blossoms from the surrounding gardens on to the green mounds of Lowick churchyard. Swiftly-moving clouds only now and then allowed a gleam to light up any object, whether ugly or beautiful, that happened to stand within its golden shower. In the churchyard the objects were remarkably various, for there was a little country crowd waiting to see the funeral. The news had spread that it was to be a "big burying"; the old gentleman had left written directions about everything, and meant to have a funeral "beyond his betters." This was true; for old Featherstone had not been a Harpagon whose passions had all been devoured by the ever-lean and ever-hungry passion of saving, and who would drive a bargain with his undertaker beforehand. He loved money, but he also loved to spend it in gratifying his peculiar tastes, and perhaps he loved it best of all as a means of making others feel his power more or less uncomfortably. If any one will here contend that there must have been traits of goodness in old Featherstone, I will not presume to deny this; but I must observe that goodness is of a modest nature, easily discouraged, and when much elbowed in early life by unabashed vices, is apt to retire into extreme privacy, so that it is more easily believed in by those who construct a selfish old gentleman theoretically, than by those who form the narrower judgments based on his personal acquaintance. In any case, he had been bent on having a handsome funeral, and on having persons "bid" to it who would rather have stayed at home. He had even desired that female relatives should follow him to the grave, and poor sister Martha had taken a difficult journey for this purpose from the Chalky Flats. She and Jane would have been altogether cheered (in a tearful manner) by this sign that a brother who disliked seeing them while he was living had been prospectively fond of their presence when he should have become a testator, if the sign had not been made equivocal by being extended to Mrs. Vincy, whose expense in handsome crape seemed to imply the most presumptuous hopes, aggravated by a bloom of complexion which told pretty plainly that she was not a blood-relation, but of that generally objectionable class called wife's kin.

We are all of us imaginative in some form or other, for images are the brood of desire; and poor old Featherstone, who laughed much at the way in which others cajoled themselves, did not escape the fellowship of illusion. In writing the programme for his burial he certainly did not make clear to himself that his pleasure in the little drama of which it formed a part was confined to anticipation. In chuckling over the vexations he could inflict by the rigid clutch of his dead hand, he inevitably mingled his consciousness with that livid stagnant presence, and so far as he was preoccupied with a future life, it was with one of gratification inside his coffin. Thus old Featherstone was imaginative, after his fashion.

However, the three mourning-coaches were filled according to the written orders of the deceased. There were pall-bearers on horse-back, with the richest scarves and hatbands, and even the under-bearers had trappings of woe which were of a good well-priced quality. The black procession, when dismounted, looked the larger for the smallness of the churchyard; the heavy human faces and the black draperies shivering in the wind seemed to tell of a world strangely incongruous with the lightly-dropping blossoms and the gleams of sunshine on the daisies. The clergyman who met the procession was Mr. Cadwallader—also according to the request of Peter Featherstone, prompted as usual by peculiar reasons. Having a contempt for curates, whom he always called understrappers, he was resolved to be buried by a beneficed clergyman. Mr. Casaubon was out of the question, not merely because he declined duty of this sort, but because Featherstone had an especial dislike to him as the rector of his own parish, who had a lien on the land in the shape of tithe, also as the deliverer of morning sermons, which the old man, being in his pew and not at all sleepy, had been obliged to sit through with an inward snarl. He had an objection to a parson stuck up above his head preaching to him. But his relations with Mr. Cadwallader had been of a different kind: the trout-stream which ran through Mr. Casaubon's land took its course through Featherstone's also, so that Mr. Cadwallader was a parson who had had to ask a favour instead of preaching. Moreover, he was one of the high gentry living four miles away from Lowick, and was thus exalted to an equal sky with the sheriff of the county and other dignities vaguely regarded as necessary to the system of things. There would be a satisfaction in being buried by Mr. Cadwallader, whose very name offered a fine opportunity for pronouncing wrongly if you liked.

This distinction conferred on the Rector of Tipton and Freshitt was the reason why Mrs. Cadwallader made one of the group that watched old Featherstone's funeral from an upper window of the manor. She was not fond of visiting that house, but she liked, as she said, to see collections of strange animals such as there would be at this funeral; and she had persuaded Sir James and the young Lady Chettam to drive the Rector and herself to Lowick in order that the visit might be altogether pleasant.

"I will go anywhere with you, Mrs. Cadwallader," Celia had said; "but I don't like funerals."

"Oh, my dear, when you have a clergyman in your family you must accommodate your tastes: I did that very early. When I married Humphrey I made up my mind to like sermons, and I set out by liking the end very much. That soon spread to the middle and the beginning, because I couldn't have the end without them."

"No, to be sure not," said the Dowager Lady Chettam, with stately emphasis.

The upper window from which the funeral could be well seen was in the room occupied by Mr. Casaubon when he had been forbidden to work; but he had resumed nearly his habitual style of life now in spite of warnings and prescriptions, and after politely welcoming Mrs. Cadwallader had slipped again into the library to chew a cud of erudite mistake about Cush and Mizraim.

But for her visitors Dorothea too might have been shut up in the library, and would not have witnessed this scene of old Featherstone's funeral, which, aloof as it seemed to be from the tenor of her life, always afterwards came back to her at the touch of certain sensitive points in memory, just as the vision of St. Peter's at Rome was inwoven with moods of despondency. Scenes which make vital changes in our neighbours' lot are but the background of our own, yet, like a particular aspect of the fields and trees, they become associated for us with the epochs of our own history, and make a part of that unity which lies in the selection of our keenest consciousness.

The dream-like association of something alien and ill-understood with the deepest secrets of her experience seemed to mirror that sense of loneliness which was due to the very ardour of Dorothea's nature. The country gentry of old time lived in a rarefied social air: dotted apart on their stations up the mountain they looked down with imperfect discrimination on the belts of thicker life below. And Dorothea was not at ease in the perspective and chilliness of that height.

"I shall not look any more," said Celia, after the train had entered the church, placing herself a little behind her husband's elbow so that she could slyly touch his coat with her cheek. "I daresay Dodo likes it: she is fond of melancholy things and ugly people."

"I am fond of knowing something about the people I live among," said Dorothea, who had been watching everything with the interest of a monk on his holiday tour. "It seems to me we know nothing of our neighbours, unless they are cottagers. One is constantly wondering what sort of lives other people lead, and how they take things. I am quite obliged to Mrs. Cadwallader for coming and calling me out of the library."

"Quite right to feel obliged to me," said Mrs. Cadwallader. "Your rich Lowick farmers are as curious as any buffaloes or bisons, and I daresay you don't half see them at church. They are quite different from your uncle's tenants or Sir James's—monsters—farmers without landlords—one can't tell how to class them."

"Most of these followers are not Lowick people," said Sir James; "I suppose they are legatees from a distance, or from Middlemarch. Lovegood tells me the old fellow has left a good deal of money as well as land."

"Think of that now! when so many younger sons can't dine at their own expense," said Mrs. Cadwallader. "Ah," turning round at the sound of the opening door, "here is Mr.

Brooke. I felt that we were incomplete before, and here is the explanation. You are come to see this odd funeral, of course?"

"No, I came to look after Casaubon—to see how he goes on, you know. And to bring a little news—a little news, my dear," said Mr. Brooke, nodding at Dorothea as she came towards him. "I looked into the library, and I saw Casaubon over his books. I told him it wouldn't do: I said, 'This will never do, you know: think of your wife, Casaubon.' And he promised me to come up. I didn't tell him my news: I said, he must come up."

"Ah, now they are coming out of church," Mrs. Cadwallader exclaimed. "Dear me, what a wonderfully mixed set! Mr. Lydgate as doctor, I suppose. But that is really a good-looking woman, and the fair young man must be her son. Who are they, Sir James, do you know?"

"I see Vincy, the mayor of Middlemarch; they are probably his wife and son," said Sir James, looking interrogatively at Mr. Brooke, who nodded and said—

"Yes, a very decent family—a very good fellow is Vincy; a credit to the manufacturing interest. You have seen him at my house, you know."

"Ah, yes: one of your secret committee," said Mrs. Cadwallader, provokingly.

"A coursing fellow, though," said Sir James, with a fox-hunter's disgust.

"And one of those who suck the life out of the wretched handloom weavers in Tipton and Freshitt. That is how his family look so fair and sleek," said Mrs. Cadwallader. "Those dark, purple-faced people are an excellent foil. Dear me, they are like a set of jugs! Do look at Humphrey: one might fancy him an ugly archangel towering above them in his white surplice."

"It's a solemn thing, though, a funeral," said Mr. Brooke, "if you take it in that light, you know."

"But I am not taking it in that light. I can't wear my solemnity too often, else it will go to rags. It was time the old man died, and none of these people are sorry."

"How piteous!" said Dorothea. "This funeral seems to me the most dismal thing I ever saw. It is a blot on the morning. I cannot bear to think that any one should die and leave no love behind."

She was going to say more, but she saw her husband enter and seat himself a little in the background. The difference his presence made to her was not always a happy one: she felt that he often inwardly objected to her speech.

"Positively," exclaimed Mrs. Cadwallader, "there is a new face come out from behind that broad man queerer than any of them: a little round head with bulging eyes—a sort of frog-face—do look. He must be of another blood, I think."

"Let me see!" said Celia, with awakened curiosity, standing behind Mrs. Cadwallader and leaning forward over her head. "Oh, what an odd face!" Then with a quick change to another sort of surprised expression, she added, "Why, Dodo, you never told me that Mr. Ladislaw was come again!"

Dorothea felt a shock of alarm: every one noticed her sudden paleness as she looked up immediately at her uncle, while Mr. Casaubon looked at her.

"He came with me, you know; he is my guest—puts up with me at the Grange," said Mr. Brooke, in his easiest tone, nodding at Dorothea, as if the announcement were just what she might have expected. "And we have brought the picture at the top of the carriage. I knew you would be pleased with the surprise, Casaubon. There you are to the very life—as Aquinas, you know. Quite the right sort of thing. And you will hear young Ladislaw talk about it. He talks uncommonly well—points out this, that, and the other—knows art and everything of that kind—companionable, you know—is up with you in any track—what I've been wanting a long while."

Mr. Casaubon bowed with cold politeness, mastering his irritation, but only so far as to be silent. He remembered Will's letter quite as well as Dorothea did; he had noticed that it was not among the letters which had been reserved for him on his recovery, and secretly concluding that Dorothea had sent word to Will not to come to Lowick, he had shrunk with proud sensitiveness from ever recurring to the subject. He now inferred that she had asked her uncle to invite Will to the Grange; and she felt it impossible at that moment to enter into any explanation.

Mrs. Cadwallader's eyes, diverted from the churchyard, saw a good deal of dumb show which was not so intelligible to her as she could have desired, and could not repress the question, "Who is Mr. Ladislaw?"

"A young relative of Mr. Casaubon's," said Sir James, promptly. His good-nature often made him quick and clear-seeing in personal matters, and he had divined from Dorothea's glance at her husband that there was some alarm in her mind.

"A very nice young fellow—Casaubon has done everything for him," explained Mr. Brooke. "He repays your expense in him, Casaubon," he went on, nodding encouragingly. "I hope he will stay with me a long while and we shall make something of my documents. I have plenty of ideas and facts, you know, and I can see he is just the man to put them into shape—remembers what the right quotations are, *omne tulit punctum*, and that sort of thing—gives subjects a kind of turn. I invited him some time ago when you were ill, Casaubon: Dorothea said you couldn't have anybody in the house, you know, and she asked me to write."

Poor Dorothea felt that every word of her uncle's was about as pleasant as a grain of sand in the eye of Mr. Casaubon. It would be altogether unfitting now to explain that she had not wished her uncle to invite Will Ladislaw. She could not in the least make clear to herself the reasons for her husband's dislike to his presence—a dislike painfully impressed on her by the scene in the library; but she felt the unbecomingness of saying anything that might convey a notion of it to others. Mr. Casaubon, indeed, had not thoroughly represented those mixed reasons to himself; irritated feeling with him, as with all of us, seeking rather for justification than for self-knowledge. But he wished to repress outward signs, and only Dorothea could discern the changes in her husband's face before he observed with more of dignified bending and sing-song than usual—

"You are exceedingly hospitable, my dear sir; and I owe you acknowledgments for exercising your hospitality towards a relative of mine."

The funeral was ended now, and the churchyard was being cleared.

"Now you can see him, Mrs. Cadwallader," said Celia. "He is just like a miniature of Mr. Casaubon's aunt that hangs in Dorothea's boudoir—quite nice-looking."

"A very pretty sprig," said Mrs. Cadwallader, dryly. "What is your nephew to be, Mr. Casaubon?"

"Pardon me, he is not my nephew. He is my cousin."

"Well, you know," interposed Mr. Brooke, "he is trying his wings. He is just the sort of young fellow to rise. I should be glad to give him an opportunity. He would make a good secretary, now, like Hobbes, Milton, Swift—that sort of man."

"I understand," said Mrs. Cadwallader. "One who can write speeches."

"I'll fetch him in now, eh, Casaubon?" said Mr. Brooke.

"He wouldn't come in till I had announced him, you know. And we'll go down and look at the picture. There you are to the life: a deep subtle sort of thinker with his forefinger on the page, while Saint Bonaventure or somebody else, rather fat and florid, is looking up at the Trinity. Everything is symbolical, you know—the higher style of art: I like that up to a certain point, but not too far—it's rather straining to keep up with, you know. But you are at home in that, Casaubon. And your painter's flesh is good—solidity, transparency, everything of that sort. I went into that a great deal at one time. However, I'll go and fetch Ladislaw."

CHAPTER XXXV

> "Non, je ne comprends pas de plus charmant plaisir
> Que de voir d'héritiers une troupe affligée,
> Le maintien interdit, et la mine allongée,
> Lire un long testament où pales, étonnés,
> On leur laisse un bonsoir avec un pied de nez.
> Pour voir au naturel leur tristesse profonde,
> Je reviendrais, je crois, exprès de l'autre monde."
> —REGNARD: *Le Légataire Universel.*

WHEN the animals entered the Ark in pairs, one may imagine that allied species made much private remark on each other, and were tempted to think that so many forms feeding on the same store of fodder were eminently superfluous, as tending to diminish the rations. (I fear the part played by the vultures on that occasion would be too painful for art to represent, those birds being disadvantageously naked about the gullet, and apparently without rites and ceremonies.)

The same sort of temptation befell the Christian Carnivora who formed Peter Featherstone's funeral procession; most of them having their minds bent on a limited store which each would have liked to get the most of. The long-recognised blood-relations and connections by marriage made already a goodly number, which, multiplied by possibilities, presented a fine range for jealous conjecture and pathetic hopefulness. Jealousy of the Vincys had created a fellowship in hostility among all persons of the Featherstone blood, so that in the absence of any decided indication that one of themselves was to have more than the rest, the dread lest that long-legged Fred Vincy should have the land was necessarily dominant, though it left abundant feeling and leisure for vaguer jealousies, such as were entertained towards Mary Garth. Solomon found time to reflect that Jonah was undeserving, and Jonah to abuse Solomon as greedy; Jane, the elder sister, held that Martha's children ought not to expect so much as the young Waules; and Martha, more lax on the subject of primogeniture, was sorry to think that Jane was so "having." These nearest of kin were naturally impressed with the unreasonableness of expectations in cousins and second cousins, and used their arithmetic in reckoning the large sums that small legacies might mount to, if there were too many of them. Two cousins were present to hear the will, and a second cousin besides Mr. Trumbull. This second cousin was a Middlemarch mercer of polite manners and superfluous aspirates. The two cousins were elderly men from Brassing, one of them conscious of claims on the score of inconvenient expense sustained by him in presents of oysters and other eatables to his rich cousin Peter; the other entirely saturnine, leaning his hands and chin on a stick, and conscious of claims based on no narrow performance but on merit generally: both blameless citizens of Brassing, who wished that Jonah Featherstone did not live there. The wit of a family is usually best received among strangers.

"Why, Trumbull himself is pretty sure of five hundred—*that* you may depend,—I shouldn't wonder if my brother promised him," said Solomon, musing aloud with his sisters, the evening before the funeral.

"Dear, dear!" said poor sister Martha, whose imagination of hundreds had been habitually narrowed to the amount of her unpaid rent.

But in the morning all the ordinary currents of conjecture were disturbed by the presence of a strange mourner who had plashed among them as if from the moon. This was the stranger described by Mrs. Cadwallader as frog-face: a man perhaps about two or three and thirty, whose prominent eyes, thin-lipped, downward-curved mouth, and hair sleekly brushed away from a forehead that sank suddenly above the ridge of the eyebrows, certainly gave his face a batrachian unchangeableness of expression. Here, clearly, was a new legatee; else why was he bidden as a mourner? Here were new possibilities, raising a new uncertainty, which almost checked remark in the mourning-coaches. We are all humiliated by the sudden discovery of a fact which has existed very comfortably and perhaps been staring at us in private while we have been making up our world entirely without it. No one had seen this questionable stranger before except Mary Garth, and she knew nothing more of him than that he had twice been to Stone Court when Mr. Featherstone was down-stairs, and had sat alone with him for several hours. She had found an opportunity of mentioning this to her father, and perhaps Caleb's were the only eyes, except the lawyer's, which examined the stranger with more of inquiry than of disgust or suspicion. Caleb Garth, having little expectation and less cupidity, was interested in the verification of his own guesses, and the calmness with which he half-smilingly rubbed his chin and shot intelligent glances much as if he were valuing a tree, made a fine contrast with the alarm or scorn visible in other faces when the unknown mourner, whose name was understood to be Rigg, entered the wainscoated parlour and took his seat near the door to make part of the audience when the will should be read. Just then Mr. Solomon and Mr. Jonah were gone up-stairs with the lawyer to search for the will; and Mrs. Waule, seeing two vacant seats between herself and Mr. Borthrop Trumbull, had the spirit to move next to that great authority, who was handling his watch-seals and trimming his outlines with a determination not to show anything so compromising to a man of ability as wonder or surprise.

"I suppose you know everything about what my poor brother's done, Mr. Trumbull," said Mrs. Waule, in the lowest of her woolly tones, while she turned her crape-shadowed bonnet towards Mr. Trumbull's ear.

"My good lady, whatever was told me was told in confidence," said the auctioneer, putting his hand up to screen that secret.

"Them who've made sure of their good-luck may be disappointed yet," Mrs. Waule continued, finding some relief in this communication.

"Hopes are often delusive," said Mr. Trumbull, still in confidence.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Waule, looking across at the Vincys, and then moving back to the side of her sister Martha.

"It's wonderful how close poor Peter was," she said, in the same undertones. "We none of us know what he might have had on his mind. I only hope and trust he wasn't a worse liver than we think of, Martha."

Poor Mrs. Cranch was bulky, and, breathing asthmatically, had the additional motive for making her remarks unexceptionable and giving them a general bearing, that even her whispers were loud and liable to sudden bursts like those of a deranged barrel-organ.

"I never *was* covetous, Jane," she replied; "but I have six children and have buried three, and I didn't marry into money. The eldest, that sits there, is but nineteen—so I leave you to guess. And stock always short, and land most awkward. But if ever I've begged and prayed, it's been to God above; though where there's one brother a bachelor and the other childless after twice marrying—anybody might think!"

Meanwhile, Mr. Vincy had glanced at the passive face of Mr. Rigg, and had taken out his snuff-box and tapped it, but had put it back again unopened as an indulgence which, however clarifying to the judgment, was unsuited to the occasion. "I shouldn't wonder if Featherstone had better feelings than any of us gave him credit for," he observed, in the ear of his wife. "This funeral shows a thought about everybody: it looks well when a man wants to be followed by his friends, and if they are humble, not to be ashamed of them. I should be all the better pleased if he'd left lots of small legacies. They may be uncommonly useful to fellows in a small way."

"Everything is as handsome as could be, crape and silk and everything," said Mrs. Vincy, contentedly.

But I am sorry to say that Fred was under some difficulty in repressing a laugh, which would have been more unsuitable than his father's snuff-box. Fred had overheard Mr. Jonah suggesting something about a "love-child," and with this thought in his mind, the stranger's face, which happened to be opposite him, affected him too ludicrously. Mary Garth, discerning his distress in the twitchings of his mouth, and his recourse to a cough, came cleverly to his rescue by asking him to change seats with her, so that he got into a shadowy corner. Fred was feeling as good-naturedly as possible towards everybody, including Rigg; and having some relenting towards all these people who were less lucky than he was aware of being himself, he would not for the world have behaved amiss; still, it was particularly easy to laugh.

But the entrance of the lawyer and the two brothers drew every one's attention.

The lawyer was Mr. Standish, and he had come to Stone Court this morning believing that he knew thoroughly well who would be pleased and who disappointed before the day was over. The will he expected to read was the last of three which he had drawn up for Mr. Featherstone. Mr. Standish was not a man who varied his manners: he behaved with the same deep-voiced, offhand-civility to everybody, as if he saw no difference in them, and talked chiefly of the hay crop, which would be "very fine, by God!" of the last bulletins concerning the King, and of the Duke of Clarence, who was a sailor every inch of him, and just the man to rule over an island like Britain.

Old Featherstone had often reflected as he sat looking at the fire that Standish would be surprised some day: it is true that if he had done as he liked at the last, and burnt the will drawn up by another lawyer, he would not have secured that minor end; still he had had his pleasure in ruminating on it. And certainly Mr. Standish was surprised, but not at all sorry; on the contrary, he rather enjoyed the zest of a little curiosity in his own mind, which the discovery of a second will added to the prospective amazement on the part of the Featherstone family.

As to the sentiments of Solomon and Jonah, they were held in utter suspense: it seemed to them that the old will would have a certain validity, and that there might be such an interlacement of poor Peter's former and latter intentions as to create endless "lawing" before anybody came by their own—an inconvenience which would have at least the advantage of going all round. Hence the brothers showed a thoroughly neutral gravity as they re-entered with Mr. Standish; but Solomon took out his white handkerchief again with a sense that in any case there would be affecting passages, and crying at funerals, however dry, was customarily served up in lawn.

Perhaps the person who felt the most throbbing excitement at this moment was Mary Garth, in the consciousness that it was she who had virtually determined the production of this second will, which might have momentous effects on the lot of some persons present. No soul except herself knew what had passed on that final night.

"The will I hold in my hand," said Mr. Standish, who, seated at the table in the middle of the room, took his time about everything, including the coughs with which he showed a disposition to clear his voice, "was drawn up by myself and executed by our deceased friend on the 9th of August 1825. But I find that there is a subsequent instrument hitherto unknown to me, bearing date the 20th of July 1826, hardly a year later than the previous one. And there is farther, I see"—Mr. Standish was cautiously travelling over the document with his spectacles—"a codicil to this latter will, bearing date March the first, 1828."

"Dear, dear!" said sister Martha, not meaning to be audible, but driven to some articulation under this pressure of dates.

"I shall begin by reading the earlier will," continued Mr. Standish, "since such, as appears by his not having destroyed the document, was the intention of deceased."

The preamble was felt to be rather long, and several besides Solomon shook their heads pathetically, looking on the ground: all eyes avoided meeting other eyes, and were chiefly fixed either on the spots in the table-cloth or on Mr. Standish's bald head; excepting Mary Garth's. When all the rest were trying to look nowhere in particular, it was safe for her to look at them. And at the sound of the first "give and bequeath" she could see all complexions changing subtly, as if some faint vibration were passing through them, save that of Mr. Rigg. He sat in unaltered calm, and, in fact, the company, preoccupied with more important problems, and with the complication of listening to bequests which might or might not be revoked, had ceased to think of him. Fred blushed, and Mr. Vincy found it impossible to do without his snuff-box in his hand, though he kept it closed.

The small bequests came first, and even the recollection that there was another will and that poor Peter might have thought better of it, could not quell the rising disgust and indignation. One likes to be done well by in every tense, past, present, and future. And here was Peter capable five years ago of leaving only two hundred apiece to his own brothers and sisters, and only a hundred apiece to his own nephews and nieces: the Garths were not mentioned, but Mrs. Vincy and Rosamond were each to have a hundred. Mr. Trumbull was to have the gold-headed cane and fifty pounds; the other second cousins and the cousins present were each to have the like handsome sum, which, as the saturnine cousin observed, was a sort of legacy that left a man nowhere; and there was much more of such offensive dribbling in favour of persons not present—problematical, and, it was to be feared, low connections. Altogether, reckoning hastily, here were about three thousand disposed of. Where then had Peter meant the rest of the money to go—and where the land? and what was revoked and what not revoked—and was the revocation for better or for worse? All emotion must be conditional, and might turn out to be the wrong thing. The men were strong enough to bear up and keep quiet under this confused suspense; some letting their lower lip fall, others pursing it up, according to the habit of their muscles. But Jane and Martha sank under the rush of questions, and began to cry; poor Mrs. Cranch being half moved with the consolation of getting any hundreds at all without working for them, and half aware that her share was scanty; whereas Mrs. Waule's mind was entirely flooded with the sense of being an own sister and getting little, while somebody else was to have much. The general expectation now was that the "much" would fall to Fred Vincy, but the Vincys themselves were surprised when ten thousand pounds in specified investments were declared to be bequeathed to him:—was the land coming too? Fred bit his lips: it was difficult to help smiling, and Mrs. Vincy felt herself the happiest of women—possible revocation shrinking out of sight in this dazzling vision.

There was still a residue of personal property as well as the land, but the whole was left to one person, and that person was—O possibilities! O expectations founded on the favour of "close" old gentlemen! O endless vocatives that would still leave expression slipping helpless from the measurement of mortal folly!—that residuary legatee was Joshua Rigg, who was also sole executor, and who was to take thenceforth the name of Featherstone.

There was a rustling which seemed like a shudder running round the room. Every one stared afresh at Mr. Rigg, who apparently experienced no surprise.

"A most singular testamentary disposition!" exclaimed Mr. Trumbull, preferring for once that he should be considered ignorant in the past. "But there is a second will—there is a further document. We have not yet heard the final wishes of the deceased."

Mary Garth was feeling that what they had yet to hear were not the final wishes. The second will revoked everything except the legacies to the low persons before mentioned (some alterations in these being the occasion of the codicil), and the bequest of all the land lying in Lowick parish, with all the stock and household furniture, to Joshua Rigg. The residue of the property was to be devoted to the erection and endowment of almshouses for old men, to be called Featherstone's Alms-Houses, and to be built on a piece of land near Middlemarch already bought for the purpose by the testator, he wishing—so the document declared—to please God Almighty. Nobody present had a farthing; but Mr. Trumbull had the gold-headed cane. It took some time for the company to recover the power of expression. Mary dared not look at Fred.

Mr. Vincy was the first to speak—after using his snuff-box energetically—and he spoke with loud indignation. "The most unaccountable will I ever heard! I should say he was not in his right mind when he made it. I should say this last will was void," added Mr. Vincy, feeling that this expression put the thing in the true light. "Eh, Standish?"

"Our deceased friend always knew what he was about, I think," said Mr. Standish. "Everything is quite regular. Here is a letter from Clemmens of Brassing tied with the will. He drew it up. A very respectable solicitor."

"I never noticed any alienation of mind—any aberration of intellect in the late Mr. Featherstone," said Borthrop Trumbull, "but I call this will eccentric. I was always willingly of service to the old soul; and he intimated pretty plainly a sense of obligation which would show itself in his will. The gold-headed cane is farcical considered as an acknowledgment to me; but happily I am above mercenary considerations."

"There's nothing very surprising in the matter that I can see," said Caleb Garth. "Anybody might have had more reason for wondering if the will had been what you might expect from an open-minded straightforward man. For my part, I wish there was no such thing as a will."

"That's a strange sentiment to come from a Christian man, by God!" said the lawyer. "I should like to know how you will back that up, Garth!"

"Oh," said Caleb, leaning forward, adjusting his finger-tips with nicety and looking meditatively on the ground. It always seemed to him that words were the hardest part of "business."

But here Mr. Jonah Featherstone made himself heard. "Well, he always was a fine hypocrite, was my brother Peter. But this will cuts out everything. If I'd known, a waggon and six horses shouldn't have drawn me from Brassing. I'll put a white hat and drab coat on to-morrow."

"Dear, dear," wept Mrs. Cranch, "and we've been at the expense of travelling, and that poor lad sitting idle here so long! It's the first time I ever heard my brother Peter was so wishful to please God Almighty; but if I was to be struck helpless I must say it's hard—I can think no other."

"It'll do him no good where he's gone, that's my belief," said Solomon, with a bitterness which was remarkably genuine, though his tone could not help being sly. "Peter was a bad liver, and almshouses won't cover it, when he's had the impudence to show it at the last."

"And all the while had got his own lawful family—brothers and sisters and nephews and nieces—and has sat in church with 'em whenever he thought well to come," said Mrs. Waule. "And might have left his property so respectable, to them that's never been used to extravagance or unsteadiness in no manner of way—and not so poor but what they could have saved every penny and made more of it. And me—the trouble I've been at, times and times, to come here and be sisterly—and him with things on his mind all the while that might make anybody's flesh creep. But if the Almighty's allowed it, He means to punish him for it. Brother Solomon, I shall be going, if you'll drive me."

"I've no desire to put my foot on the premises again," said Solomon. "I've got land of my own and property of my own to will away."

"It's a poor tale how luck goes in the world," said Jonah. "It never answers to have a bit of spirit in you. You'd better be a dog in the manger. But those above ground might learn a lesson. One fool's will is enough in a family."

"There's more ways than one of being a fool," said Solomon. "I shan't leave my money to be poured down the sink, and I shan't leave it to fondlings from Africay. I like Featherstones that were brewed such, and not turned Featherstones with sticking the name on 'em."

Solomon addressed these remarks in a loud aside to Mrs. Waule as he rose to accompany her. Brother Jonah felt himself capable of much more stinging wit than this, but he reflected that there was no use in offending the new proprietor of Stone Court, until you were certain that he was quite without intentions of hospitality towards witty men whose name he was about to bear.

Mr. Joshua Rigg, in fact, appeared to trouble himself little about any innuendoes, but showed a notable change of manner, walking coolly up to Mr. Standish and putting business questions with much coolness. He had a high chirping voice and a vile accent. Fred, whom he no longer moved to laughter, thought him the lowest monster he had ever seen. But Fred was feeling rather sick. The Middlemarch mercer waited for an opportunity of engaging Mr. Rigg in conversation: there was no knowing how many pairs of legs the new proprietor might require hose for, and profits were more to be relied on than legacies. Also, the mercer, as a second cousin, was dispassionate enough to feel curiosity.

Mr. Vincy, after his one outburst, had remained proudly silent, though too much preoccupied with unpleasant feelings to think of moving, till he observed that his wife had gone to Fred's side and was crying silently while she held her darling's hand. He rose immediately, and turning his back on the company while he said to her in an undertone,—" Don't give way, Lucy ; don't make a fool of yourself, my dear, before these people," he added in his usual loud voice—" Go and order the phaeton, Fred ; I have no time to waste."

Mary Garth had before this been getting ready to go home with her father. She met Fred in the hall, and now for the first time had the courage to look at him. He had that withered sort of paleness which will sometimes come on young faces, and his hand was very cold when she shook it. Mary too was agitated : she was conscious that fatally, without will of her own, she had perhaps made a great difference to Fred's lot.

" Good-bye," she said, with affectionate sadness. " Be brave, Fred. I do believe you are better without the money. What was the good of it to Mr. Featherstone ? "

" That's all very fine," said Fred, pettishly. " What is a fellow to do ? *I must* go into the Church now." (He knew that this would vex Mary : very well ; then she must tell him what else he could do.) " And I thought I should be able to pay your father at once and make everything right. And you have not even a hundred pounds left you. What shall you do now, Mary ? "

" Take another situation, of course, as soon as I can get one. My father has enough to do to keep the rest, without me. Good-bye."

In a very short time Stone Court was cleared of well-brewed Featherstones and other long-accustomed visitors. Another stranger had been brought to settle in the neighbourhood of Middlemarch, but in the case of Mr. Rigg Featherstone there was more discontent with immediate visible consequence than speculation as to the effect which his presence might have in the future. No soul was prophetic enough to have any foreboding as to what might appear on the trail of Joshua Rigg.

And here I am naturally led to reflect on the means of elevating a low subject. Historical parallels are remarkably efficient in this way. The chief objection to them is, that the diligent narrator may lack space, or (what is often the same thing) may not be able to think of them with any degree of particularity, though he may have a philosophical confidence that if known they would be illustrative. It seems an easier and shorter way to dignity, to observe that—since there never was a true story which could not be told in parables where you might put a monkey for a margrave, and *vice versa*—whatever has been or is to be narrated by me about low people, may be ennobled by being considered a parable; so that if any bad habits and ugly consequences are brought into view, the reader may have the relief of regarding them as not more than figuratively ungenteel, and may feel himself virtually in company with persons of some style. Thus while I tell the truth about loobies, my reader's imagination need not be entirely excluded from an occupation with lords; and the petty sums which any bankrupt of high standing would be sorry to retire upon, may be lifted to the level of high commercial transactions by the inexpensive addition of proportional ciphers.

As to any provincial history in which the agents are all of high moral rank, that must be of a date long posterior to the first Reform Bill, and Peter Featherstone, you perceive, was dead and buried some months before Lord Grey came into office.

CHAPTER XXXVI

"'Tis strange to see the humours of these men,
These great aspiring spirits, that should be wise:

. . . . . .

For being the nature of great spirits to love
To be where they may be most eminent;
They, rating of themselves so farre above
Us in conceit, with whom they do frequent,
Imagine how we wonder and esteeme
All that they do or say; which makes them strive
To make our admiration more extreme,
Which they suppose they cannot, 'less they give
Notice of their extreme and highest thoughts."
—Daniel: *Tragedy of Philotas.*

Mr. Vincy went home from the reading of the will with his point of view considerably changed in relation to many subjects. He was an open-minded man, but given to indirect modes of expressing himself: when he was disappointed in a market for his silk braids, he swore at the groom; when his brother-in-law Bulstrode had vexed him, he made cutting remarks on Methodism; and it was now apparent that he regarded Fred's idleness with a sudden increase of severity, by his throwing an embroidered cap out of the smoking-room on to the hall-floor.

"Well, sir," he observed, when that young gentleman was moving off to bed, "I hope you've made up your mind now to go up next term and pass your examination. I've taken my resolution, so I advise you to lose no time in taking yours."

Fred made no answer: he was too utterly depressed. Twenty-four hours ago he had thought that instead of needing to know what he should do, he should by this time know that he needed to do nothing: that he should hunt in pink, have a first-rate hunter, ride to cover on a fine hack, and be generally respected for doing so; moreover, that he should be able at once to pay Mr. Garth, and that Mary could not longer have any reason for not marrying him. And all this was to have come without study or other inconvenience, purely by the favour of providence in the shape of an old gentleman's caprice. But now, at the end of the twenty-four hours, all those firm expectations were upset. It was "rather hard lines" that while he was smarting under this disappointment he should be treated as if he could have helped it. But he went away silently and his mother pleaded for him.

"Don't be hard on the poor boy, Vincy. He'll turn out well yet, though that wicked man has deceived him. I feel as sure as I sit here, Fred will turn out well—else why was he brought back from the brink of the grave? And I call it a robbery: it was like giving him the land, to promise it; and what is promising, if making everybody believe is not promising? And you see he did leave him ten thousand pounds, and then took it away again."

"Took it away again!" said Mr. Vincy, pettishly. "I tell you the lad's an unlucky lad, Lucy. And you've always spoiled him."

"Well, Vincy, he was my first, and you made a fine fuss with him when he came. You were as proud as proud," said Mrs. Vincy, easily recovering her cheerful smile.

"Who knows what babies will turn to? I was fool enough, I daresay," said the husband—more mildly, however.

"But who has handsomer, better children than ours? Fred is far beyond other people's sons: you may hear it in his speech, that he has kept college company. And Rosamond—where is there a girl like her? She might stand beside any lady in the land, and only look the better for it. You see—Mr. Lydgate has kept the highest company and been everywhere, and he fell in love with her at once. Not but what I could have wished Rosamond had not engaged herself. She might have met somebody on a visit who would have been a far better match; I mean at her schoolfellow Miss Willoughby's. There are relations in that family quite as high as Mr. Lydgate's."

"Damn relations!" said Mr. Vincy; "I've had enough of them. I don't want a son-in-law who has got nothing but his relations to recommend him."

"Why, my dear," said Mrs. Vincy, "you seemed as pleased as could be about it. It's true, I wasn't at home; but Rosamond told me you hadn't a word to say against the engagement. And she has begun to buy in the best linen and cambric for her underclothing."

"Not by my will," said Mr. Vincy. "I shall have enough to do this year, with an idle scamp of a son, without paying for wedding-clothes. The times are as tight as can be; everybody is being ruined; and I don't believe Lydgate has got a farthing. I shan't give my consent to their marrying. Let 'em wait, as their elders have done before 'em."

"Rosamond will take it hard, Vincy, and you know you never could bear to cross her."

"Yes, I could. The sooner the engagement's off, the better. I don't believe he'll ever make an income, the way he goes on. He makes enemies; that's all I hear of his making."

"But he stands very high with Mr. Bulstrode, my dear. The marriage would please *him*, I should think."

"Please the deuce!" said Mr. Vincy. "Bulstrode won't pay for their keep. And if Lydgate thinks I'm going to give money for them to set up housekeeping, he's mistaken, that's all. I expect I shall have to put down my horses soon. You'd better tell Rosy what I say."

This was a not infrequent procedure with Mr. Vincy—to be rash in jovial assent, and on becoming subsequently conscious that he had been rash, to employ others in making the offensive retractation. However, Mrs. Vincy, who never willingly opposed her husband, lost no time the next morning in letting Rosamond know what he had said. Rosamond, examining some muslin-work, listened in silence, and at the end gave a certain turn of her graceful neck, of which only long experience could teach you that it meant perfect obstinacy.

"What do you say, my dear?" said her mother, with affectionate deference.

"Papa does not mean anything of the kind," said Rosamond, quite calmly. "He has always said that he wished me to marry the man I loved. And I shall marry Mr. Lydgate. It is seven weeks now since papa gave his consent. And I hope we shall have Mrs. Bretton's house."

"Well, my dear, I shall leave you to manage your papa. You always do manage everybody. But if we ever do go and get damask, Sadler's is the place—far better than Hopkins's. Mrs. Bretton's is very large, though: I should love you to have such a house ; but it will take a great deal of furniture—carpeting and everything, besides plate and glass. And you hear, your papa says he will give no money. Do you think Mr. Lydgate expects it ? "

" You cannot imagine that I should ask him, mamma. Of course he understands his own affairs."

"But he may have been looking for money, my dear, and we all thought of your having a pretty legacy as well as Fred ;—and now everything is so dreadful—there's no pleasure in thinking of anything, with that poor boy disappointed as he is."

" That has nothing to do with my marriage, mamma. Fred must leave off being idle. I am going up-stairs to take this work to Miss Morgan : she does the open-hemming very well. Mary Garth might do some work for me now, I should think. Her sewing is exquisite ; it is the nicest thing I know about Mary. I should so like to have all my cambric frilling double-hemmed. And it takes a long time."

Mrs. Vincy's belief that Rosamond could manage her papa was well founded. Apart from his dinners and his coursing, Mr. Vincy, blustering as he was, had as little of his own way as if he had been a prime minister : the force of circumstances was easily too much for him, as it is for most pleasure-loving florid men ; and the circumstance called Rosamond was particularly forcible by means of that mild persistence which, as we know, enables a white soft living substance to make its way in spite of opposing rock. Papa was not a rock : he had no other fixity than that fixity of alternating impulses sometimes called habit, and this was altogether unfavourable to his taking the only decisive line of conduct in relation to his daughter's engagement —namely, to inquire thoroughly into Lydgate's circumstances, declare his own inability to furnish money, and forbid alike either a speedy marriage or an engagement which must be too lengthy. That seems very simple and easy in the statement ; but a disagreeable resolve formed in the chill hours of the morning had as many conditions against it as the early frost, and rarely persisted under the warming influences of the day. The indirect though emphatic expression of opinion to which Mr. Vincy was prone suffered much restraint in this case : Lydgate was a proud man towards whom innuendoes were obviously unsafe, and throwing his hat on the floor was out of the question. Mr. Vincy was a little in awe of him, a little vain that he wanted to marry Rosamond, a little indisposed to raise a question of money in which his own position was not advantageous, a little afraid of being worsted in dialogue with a man better educated and more highly bred than himself, and a little afraid of doing what his daughter would not like. The part Mr. Vincy preferred playing was that of the generous host whom nobody criticises. In the earlier half of the day there was business to hinder any formal communication of an adverse resolve; in the later there was dinner, wine, whist, and general satisfaction. And in the meanwhile the hours were each leaving their little deposit and gradually forming the final reason for inaction, namely, that action was too late.

The accepted lover spent most of his evenings in Lowick Gate, and a love-making not at all dependent on money-advances from fathers-in-law, or prospective income from a profession, went on flourishingly under Mr. Vincy's own eyes. Young love-making—that gossamer web! Even the points it clings to—the things whence its subtle interlacings are swung—are scarcely perceptible; momentary touches of finger-tips, meetings of rays from blue and dark orbs, unfinished phrases, lightest changes of cheek and lip, faintest tremors. The web itself is made of spontaneous beliefs and indefinable joys, yearnings of one life towards another, visions of completeness, indefinite trust. And Lydgate fell to spinning that web from his inward self with wonderful rapidity, in spite of experience supposed to be finished off with the drama of Laure—in spite too of medicine and biology; for the inspection of macerated muscle or of eyes presented in a dish (like Santa Lucia's), and other incidents of scientific inquiry, are observed to be less incompatible with poetic love than a native dulness or a lively addiction to the lowest prose. As for Rosamond, she was in the water-lily's expanding wonderment at its own fuller life, and she too was spinning industriously at the mutual web. All this went on in the corner of the drawing-room where the piano stood, and subtle as it was, the light made it a sort of rainbow visible to many observers besides Mr. Farebrother. The certainty that Miss Vincy and Mr. Lydgate were engaged became general in Middlemarch without the aid of formal announcement.

Aunt Bulstrode was again stirred to anxiety; but this time she addressed herself to her brother, going to the warehouse expressly to avoid Mrs. Vincy's volatility. His replies were not satisfactory.

"Walter, you never mean to tell me that you have allowed all this to go on without inquiry into Mr. Lydgate's prospects?" said Mrs. Bulstrode, opening her eyes with wider gravity at her brother, who was in his peevish warehouse humour. "Think of this girl brought up in luxury—in too worldly a way, I am sorry to say—what will she do on a small income?"

"Oh, confound it, Harriet! what can I do when men come into the town without any asking of mine? Did you shut your house up against Lydgate? Bulstrode has pushed him forward more than anybody. I never made any fuss about the young fellow. You should go and talk to your husband about it, not me."

"Well, really, Walter, how can Mr. Bulstrode be to blame? I am sure he did not wish for the engagement."

"Oh, if Bulstrode had not taken him by the hand, I should never have invited him."

"But you called him in to attend on Fred, and I am sure that was a mercy," said Mrs. Bulstrode, losing her clue in the intricacies of the subject.

"I don't know about mercy," said Mr. Vincy, testily. "I know I am worried more than I like with my family. I was a good brother to you, Harriet, before you married Bulstrode, and I must say he doesn't always show that friendly spirit towards your family that might have been expected of him." Mr. Vincy was very little like a Jesuit, but no accomplished Jesuit could have turned a question more adroitly. Harriet had to defend her husband instead of blaming her brother, and the conversation ended at a point as far from the beginning as some recent sparring between the brothers-in-law at a vestry meeting.

Mrs. Bulstrode did not repeat her brother's complaints to her husband, but in the evening she spoke to him of Lydgate and Rosamond. He did not share her warm interest, however; and only spoke with resignation of the risks attendant on the beginning of medical practice and the desirability of prudence.

"I am sure we are bound to pray for that thoughtless girl—brought up as she has been," said Mrs. Bulstrode, wishing to rouse her husband's feelings.

"Truly, my dear," said Mr. Bulstrode, assentingly. "Those who are not of this world can do little else to arrest the errors of the obstinately worldly. That is what we must accustom ourselves to recognise with regard to your brother's family. I could have wished that Mr. Lydgate had not entered into such a union; but my relations with him are limited to that use of his gifts for God's purposes which is taught us by the divine government under each dispensation."

Mrs. Bulstrode said no more, attributing some dissatisfaction which she felt to her own want of spirituality. She believed that her husband was one of those men whose memoirs should be written when they died.

As to Lydgate himself, having been accepted, he was prepared to accept all the consequences which he believed himself to foresee with perfect clearness. Of course he must be married in a year—perhaps even in half a year. This was not what he had intended; but other schemes would not be hindered: they would simply adjust themselves anew. Marriage, of course, must be prepared for in the usual way. A house must be taken instead of the rooms he at present occupied; and Lydgate, having heard Rosamond speak with admiration of old Mrs. Bretton's house (situated in Lowick Gate), took notice when it fell vacant after the old lady's death, and immediately entered into treaty for it.

He did this in an episodic way, very much as he gave orders to his tailor for every requisite of perfect dress, without any notion of being extravagant. On the contrary, he would have despised any ostentation of expense; his profession had familiarised him with all grades of poverty, and he cared much for those who suffered hardships. He would have behaved perfectly at a table where the sauce was served in a jug with the handle off, and he would have remembered nothing about a grand dinner except that a man was there who talked well. But it had never occurred to him that he should live in any other than what he would have called an ordinary way, with green glasses for hock, and excellent waiting at table. In warming himself at French social theories he had brought away no smell of scorching. We may handle even extreme opinions with impunity while our furniture, our dinner-giving, and preference for armorial bearings in our own case, link us indissolubly with the established order. And Lydgate's tendency was not towards extreme opinions: he would have liked no barefooted doctrines, being particular about his boots: he was no radical in relation to anything but medical reform and the prosecution of discovery. In the rest of practical life he walked by hereditary habit; half from that personal pride and unreflecting egoism which I have already called commonness, and half from that *naïveté* which belonged to preoccupation with favourite ideas.

Any inward debate Lydgate had as to the consequence of this engagement which had stolen upon him, turned on the paucity of time rather than of money. Certainly, being in love and being expected continually by some one who always turned out to be prettier than memory could represent her to be, did interfere with the diligent use of spare hours which might serve some "plodding fellow of a German" to make the great, imminent discovery. This was really an argument for not deferring the marriage too long, as he implied to Mr. Farebrother, one day that the Vicar came to his room with some pond-products which he wanted to examine under a better microscope than his own, and, finding Lydgate's tableful of apparatus and specimens in confusion, said sarcastically,

"Eros has degenerated; he began by introducing order and harmony, and now he brings back chaos."

"Yes, at some stages," said Lydgate, lifting his brows and smiling, while he began to arrange his microscope. "But a better order will begin after."

"Soon?" said the Vicar.

"I hope so, really. This unsettled state of affairs uses up the time, and when one has notions in science, every moment is an opportunity. I feel sure that marriage must be the best thing for a man who wants to work steadily. He has everything at home then—no teasing with personal speculations. He can get calmness and freedom."

"You are an enviable dog," said the Vicar, "to have such a prospect—Rosamond, calmness and freedom, all to your share. Here am I with nothing but my pipe and pond animalcules. Now, are you ready?"

Lydgate did not mention to the Vicar another reason he had for wishing to shorten the period of courtship. It was rather irritating to him, even with the wine of love in his veins, to be obliged to mingle so often with the family part at the Vincys', and to enter so much into Middlemarch gossip, protracted good cheer, whist-playing, and general futility. He had to be deferential when Mr. Vincy decided questions with trenchant ignorance, especially as to those liquors which were the best inward pickle, preserving you from the effects of bad air. Mrs. Vincy's openness and simplicity were quite unstreaked with suspicion as to the subtle offence she might give to the taste of her intended son-in-law; and altogether Lydgate had to confess to himself that he was descending a little in relation to Rosamond's family. But that exquisite creature herself suffered in the same sort of way:—it was at least one delightful thought that in marrying her, he could give her a much-needed transplantation.

"Dear!" he said to her one evening, in his gentlest tone, as he sat down by her and looked closely at her face——

But I must first say that he had found her alone in the drawing-room where the great old-fashioned window, almost as large as the side of the room, was opened to the summer scents of the garden at the back of the house. Her father and mother were gone to a party, and the rest were all out with the butterflies.

"Dear! your eyelids are red."

"Are they?" said Rosamond. "I wonder why." It was not in her nature to pour forth wishes or grievances. They only came forth gracefully on solicitation.

"As if you could hide it from me!" said Lydgate, laying his hand tenderly on both of hers. "Don't I see a tiny drop on one of the lashes? Things trouble you, and you don't tell me. That is unloving."

"Why should I tell you what you cannot alter? They are everyday things:—perhaps they have been a little worse lately."

"Family annoyances. Don't fear speaking. I guess them."

"Papa has been more irritable lately. Fred makes him angry, and this morning there was a fresh quarrel because Fred threatens to throw his whole education away, and do something quite beneath him. And besides——"

Rosamond hesitated, and her cheeks were gathering a slight flush. Lydgate had never seen her in trouble since the morning of their engagement, and he had never felt so passionately towards her as at this moment. He kissed the hesitating lips gently, as if to encourage them.

"I feel that papa is not quite pleased about our engagement," Rosamond continued, almost in a whisper; "and he said last night that he should certainly speak to you and say it must be given up."

"Will you give it up?" said Lydgate, with quick energy—almost angrily.

"I never give up anything that I choose to do," said Rosamond, recovering her calmness at the touching of this cord.

"God bless you!" said Lydgate, kissing her again. This constancy of purpose in the right place was adorable. He went on:—

"It is too late now for your father to say that our engagement must be given up. You are of age, and I claim you as mine. If anything is done to make you unhappy,—that is a reason for hastening our marriage."

An unmistakable delight shone forth from the blue eyes that met his, and the radiance seemed to light up all his future with mild sunshine. Ideal happiness (of the kind known in the Arabian Nights, in which you are invited to step from the labour and discord of the street into a paradise where everything is given to you and nothing claimed) seemed to be an affair of a few weeks' waiting, more or less.

"Why should we defer it?" he said, with ardent insistence. "I have taken the house now: everything else can soon be got ready—can it not? You will not mind about new clothes. Those can be bought afterwards."

"What original notions you clever men have!" said Rosamond, dimpling with more thorough laughter than usual at this humorous incongruity. "This is the first time I ever heard of wedding-clothes being bought after marriage."

"But you don't mean to say you would insist on my waiting months for the sake of clothes?" said Lydgate, half thinking that Rosamond was tormenting him prettily, and half fearing that she really shrank from speedy marriage. "Remember, we are looking forward to a better sort of happiness even than this—being continually together, independent of others, and ordering our lives as we will. Come, dear, tell me how soon you can be altogether mine."

There was a serious pleading in Lydgate's tone, as if he felt that she would be injuring him by any fantastic delays. Rosamond became serious too, and slightly meditative; in fact, she was going through many intricacies of lace-edging and hosiery and petticoat-tucking, in order to give an answer that would at least be approximative.

"Six weeks would be ample—say so, Rosamond," insisted Lydgate, releasing her hands to put his arm gently round her.

One little hand immediately went to pat her hair, while she gave her neck a meditative turn, and then said seriously—

"There would be the house-linen and the furniture to be prepared. Still, mamma could see to those while we were away."

"Yes, to be sure. We must be away a week or so."

"Oh, more than that!" said Rosamond, earnestly. She was thinking of her evening dresses for the visit to Sir Godwin Lydgate's, which she had long been secretly hoping for as a delightful employment of at least one quarter of the honeymoon, even if she deferred her introduction to the uncle who was a doctor of divinity (also a pleasing though sober kind of rank, when sustained by blood). She looked at her lover with some wondering remonstrance as she spoke, and he readily understood that she might wish to lengthen the sweet time of double solitude.

"Whatever you wish, my darling, when the day is fixed. But let us take a decided course, and put an end to any discomfort you may be suffering. Six weeks!—I am sure they would be ample."

"I could certainly hasten the work," said Rosamond. "Will you, then, mention it to papa?—I think it would be better to write to him." She blushed and looked at him as the garden flowers look at us when we walk forth happily among them in the transcendent evening light: is there not a soul beyond utterance, half-nymph, half-child, in those delicate petals which glow and breathe about the centres of deep colour?

He touched her ear and a little bit of neck under it with his lips, and they sat quite still for many minutes which flowed by them like a small gurgling brook with the kisses of the sun upon it. Rosamond thought that no one could be more in love than she was; and Lydgate thought that after all his wild mistakes and absurd credulity, he had found perfect womanhood—felt as if already breathed upon by exquisite wedded affection such as would be bestowed by an accomplished creature who venerated his high musings and momentous labours and would never interfere with them; who would create order in the home and accounts with still magic, yet keep her fingers ready to touch the lute and transform life into romance at any moment; who was instructed to the true womanly limit and not a hair's-breadth beyond—docile, therefore, and ready to carry out behests which came from beyond that limit. It was plainer now than ever that his notion of remaining much longer a bachelor had been a mistake: marriage would not be an obstruction but a furtherance. And happening the next day to accompany a patient to Brassing, he saw a dinner-service there which struck him as so exactly the right thing that he bought it at once. It saved time to do these things just when you thought of them, and Lydgate hated ugly crockery. The dinner-service in question was expensive, but that might be in the nature of dinner-services. Furnishing was necessarily expensive; but then it had to be done only once.

"It must be lovely," said Mrs. Vincy, when Lydgate mentioned his purchase with some descriptive touches. "Just what Rosy ought to have. I trust in heaven it won't be broken!"

"One must hire servants who will not break things," said

Lydgate. (Certainly, this was reasoning with an imperfect vision of sequences. But at that period there was no sort of reasoning which was not more or less sanctioned by men of science.)

Of course it was unnecessary to defer the mention of anything to mamma, who did not readily take views that were not cheerful, and being a happy wife herself, had hardly any feeling but pride in her daughter's marriage. But Rosamond had good reasons for suggesting to Lydgate that papa should be appealed to in writing. She prepared for the arrival of the letter by walking with her papa to the warehouse the next morning, and telling him on the way that Mr. Lydgate wished to be married soon.

"Nonsense, my dear," said Mr. Vincy. "What has he got to marry on? You'd much better give up the engagement. I've told you so pretty plainly before this. What have you had such an education for, if you are to go and marry a poor man? It's a cruel thing for a father to see."

"Mr. Lydgate is not poor, papa. He bought Mr. Peacock's practice, which, they say, is worth eight or nine hundred a-year."

"Stuff and nonsense! What's buying a practice? He might as well buy next year's swallows. It'll all slip through his fingers."

"On the contrary, papa, he will increase the practice. See how he has been called in by the Chettams and Casaubons."

"I hope he knows I shan't give anything—with this disappointment about Fred, and Parliament going to be dissolved, and machine-breaking everywhere, and an election coming on——"

"Dear papa! what can that have to do with my marriage?"

"A pretty deal to do with it! We may all be ruined for what I know—the country's in that state! Some say it's the end of the world, and be hanged if I don't think it looks like it. Anyhow, it's not a time for me to be drawing money out of my business, and I should wish Lydgate to know that."

"I am sure he expects nothing, papa. And he has such very high connections: he is sure to rise in one way or another. He is engaged in making scientific discoveries."

Mr. Vincy was silent.

"I cannot give up my only prospect of happiness, papa. Mr. Lydgate is a gentleman. I could never love any one who was not a perfect gentleman. You would not like me to go into a consumption, as Arabella Hawley did. And you know that I never change my mind."

Again papa was silent.

"Promise me, papa, that you will consent to what we wish. We shall never give each other up; and you know that you have always objected to long courtships and late marriages."

There was a little more urgency of this kind, till Mr. Vincy said, "Well, well, child, he must write to me first before I can answer him,"—and Rosamond was certain that she had gained her point.

Mr. Vincy's answer consisted chiefly in a demand that Lydgate should insure his life—a demand immediately conceded. This was a delightfully reassuring idea supposing that Lydgate died, but in the meantime not a self-supporting idea. However, it seemed to make everything comfortable about Rosamond's marriage; and the necessary purchases went on with much spirit. Not without prudential considerations, however. A bride (who is going to visit at a baronet's) must have a few first-rate pocket-handkerchiefs; but beyond the absolutely necessary half-dozen, Rosamond contented herself without the very highest style of embroidery and Valenciennes. Lydgate also, finding that his sum of eight hundred pounds had been considerably reduced since he had come to Middlemarch, restrained his inclination for some plate of an old pattern which was shown to him when he went into Kibble's establishment at Brassing to buy forks and spoons. He was too proud to act as if he presupposed that Mr. Vincy would advance money to provide furniture; and though, since it would not be necessary to pay for everything at once, some bills would be left standing over, he did not waste time in conjecturing how much his father-in-law would give in the form of dowry, to make payment easy. He was not going to do anything extravagant, but the requisite things must be bought, and it would be bad economy to buy them of a poor quality. All these matters were by the by. Lydgate foresaw that science and his profession were the objects he should alone pursue enthusiastically; but he could not imagine himself pursuing them in such a home as Wrench had—the doors all open, the oil-cloth worn, the children in soiled pinafores, and lunch lingering in the form of bones, black-handled knives and willow-pattern. But Wrench had a wretched lymphatic wife who made a mummy of herself indoors in a large shawl; and he must have altogether begun with an ill-chosen domestic apparatus.

Rosamond, however, was on her side much occupied with conjectures, though her quick imitative perception warned her against betraying them too crudely.

"I shall like so much to know your family," she said one day, when the wedding-journey was being discussed. "We might perhaps take a direction that would allow us to see them as we returned. Which of your uncles do you like best?"

"Oh,—my uncle Godwin, I think. He is a good-natured old fellow."

"You were constantly at his house at Quallingham, when you were a boy, were you not? I should so like to see the old spot and everything you were used to. Does he know you are going to be married?"

"No," said Lydgate, carelessly, turning in his chair and rubbing his hair up.

"Do send him word of it, you naughty undutiful nephew. He will perhaps ask you to take me to Quallingham; and then you could show me about the grounds, and I could imagine you there when you were a boy. Remember, you see me in my home, just as it has been since I was a child. It is not fair that I should be so ignorant of yours. But perhaps you would be a little ashamed of me. I forgot that."

Lydgate smiled at her tenderly, and really accepted the suggestion that the proud pleasure of showing so charming a bride was worth some trouble. And now he came to think of it, he would like to see the old spots with Rosamond.

"I will write to him, then. But my cousins are bores."

It seemed magnificent to Rosamond to be able to speak so slightingly of a baronet's family, and she felt much contentment in the prospect of being able to estimate them contemptuously on her own account.

But mamma was near spoiling all, a day or two later, by saying, "I hope your uncle Sir Godwin will not look down on Rosy, Mr. Lydgate. I should think he would do something handsome. A thousand or two can be nothing to a baronet."

"Mamma!" said Rosamond, blushing deeply; and Lydgate pitied her so much that he remained silent and went to the other end of the room to examine a print curiously, as if he had been absent-minded. Mamma had a little filial lecture afterwards, and was docile as usual. But Rosamond reflected that if any of those high-bred cousins who were bores, should be induced to visit Middlemarch, they would see many things in her own family which might shock them. Hence it seemed desirable that Lydgate should by-and-by get some first-rate position elsewhere than in Middlemarch; and this could hardly be difficult in the case of a man who had a titled uncle and could make discoveries. Lydgate, you perceive, had talked fervidly to Rosamond of his hopes as to the highest uses of his life, and had found it delightful to be listened to by a creature who would bring him the sweet furtherance of satisfying affection—beauty—repose—such help as our thoughts get from the summer sky and the flower-fringed meadows.

Lydgate relied much on the psychological difference between what for the sake of variety I will call goose and gander: especially on the innate submissiveness of the goose as beautifully corresponding to the strength of the gander.

CHAPTER XXXVII

"Thrice happy she that is so well assured
Unto herself, and settled so in heart,
That neither will for better be allured
Ne fears to worse with any chance to start,
But like a steddy ship doth strongly part
The raging waves, and keeps her course aright;
Ne aught for tempest doth from it depart,
Ne aught for fairer weather's false delight.
Such self-assurance need not fear the spight
Of grudging foes; ne favour seek of friends;
But in the stay of her own stedfast might
Neither to one herself nor other bends.
  Most happy she that most assured doth rest,
  But he most happy who such one loves best."

—SPENSER.

THE doubt hinted by Mr. Vincy whether it were only the general election or the end of the world that was coming on, now that George the Fourth was dead, Parliament dissolved, Wellington and Peel generally depreciated and the new King apologetic, was a feeble type of the uncertainties in provincial opinion at that time. With the glow-worm lights of country places, how could men see which were their own thoughts in the confusion of a Tory Ministry passing Liberal measures, of Tory nobles and electors being anxious to return Liberals rather than friends of the recreant Ministers, and of outcries for remedies which seemed to have a mysteriously remote bearing on private interest and were made suspicious by the advocacy of disagreeable neighbours? Buyers of the Middlemarch newspapers found themselves in an anomalous position: during the agitation on the Catholic Question many had given up the "Pioneer"—which had a motto from Charles James Fox and was in the van of progress—because it had taken Peel's side about the Papists, and had thus blotted its Liberalism with a toleration of Jesuitry and Baal; but they were ill-satisfied with the "Trumpet," which—since its blasts against Rome, and in the general flaccidity of the public mind (nobody knowing who would support whom)—had become feeble in its blowing.

It was a time, according to a noticeable article in the "Pioneer," when the crying needs of the country might well counteract a reluctance to public action on the part of men whose minds had from long experience acquired breadth as well as concentration, decision of judgment as well as tolerance, dispassionateness as well as energy—in fact, all those qualities which in the melancholy experience of mankind have been the least disposed to share lodgings.

Mr. Hackbutt, whose fluent speech was at that time floating more widely than usual, and leaving much uncertainty as to its ultimate channel, was heard to say in Mr. Hawley's office that the article in question "emanated" from Brooke of Tipton, and that Brooke had secretly bought the "Pioneer" some months ago.

"That means mischief, eh?" said Mr. Hawley. "He's got the freak of being a popular man now, after dangling about like a stray tortoise. So much the worse for him. I've had my eye on him for some time. He shall be prettily pumped upon. He's a damned bad landlord. What business has an old county man to come currying favour with a low set of dark-blue freemen? As to his paper, I only hope he may do the writing himself. It would be worth our paying for."

"I understand he has got a very brilliant young fellow to edit it, who can write the highest style of leading article, quite equal to anything in the London papers. And he means to take very high ground on Reform."

"Let Brooke reform his rent-roll. He's a cursed old screw, and the buildings all over his estate are going to rack. I suppose this young fellow is some loose fish from London."

"His name is Ladislaw. He is said to be of foreign extraction."

"I know the sort," said Mr. Hawley; "some emissary. He'll begin with flourish about the Rights of Man and end with murdering a wench. That's the style."

"You must concede that there are abuses, Hawley," said Mr.

Hackbutt, foreseeing some political disagreement with his family lawyer. "I myself should never favour immoderate views—in fact I take my stand with Huskisson—but I cannot blind myself to the consideration that the non-representation of large towns——"

"Large towns be damned!" said Mr. Hawley, impatient of exposition. "I know a little too much about Middlemarch elections. Let 'em quash every pocket borough to-morrow, and bring in every mushroom town in the kingdom—they'll only increase the expense of getting into Parliament. I go upon facts."

Mr. Hawley's disgust at the notion of the "Pioneer" being edited by an emissary, and of Brooke becoming actively political—as if a tortoise of desultory pursuits should protrude its small head ambitiously and become rampant—was hardly equal to the annoyance felt by some members of Mr. Brooke's own family. The result had oozed forth gradually, like the discovery that your neighbour has set up an unpleasant kind of manufacture which will be permanently under your nostrils without legal remedy. The "Pioneer" had been secretly bought even before Will Ladislaw's arrival, the expected opportunity having offered itself in the readiness of the proprietor to part with a valuable property which did not pay; and in the interval since Mr. Brooke had written his invitation, those germinal ideas of making his mind tell upon the world at large which had been present in him from his younger years, but had hitherto lain in some obstruction, had been sprouting under cover.

The development was much furthered by a delight in his guest which proved greater even than he had anticipated. For it seemed that Will was not only at home in all those artistic and literary subjects which Mr. Brooke had gone into at one time, but that he was strikingly ready at seizing the points of the political situation, and dealing with them in that large spirit which, aided by adequate memory, lends itself to quotation and general effectiveness of treatment.

"He seems to me a kind of Shelley, you know," Mr. Brooke took an opportunity of saying, for the gratification of Mr. Casaubon. "I don't mean as to anything objectionable—laxities or atheism, or anything of that kind, you know—Ladislaw's sentiments in every way I am sure are good—indeed, we were talking a great deal together last night. But he has the same sort of enthusiasm for liberty, freedom, emancipation—a fine thing under guidance—under guidance, you know. I think I shall be able to put him on the right tack; and I am the more pleased because he is a relation of yours, Casaubon."

If the right tack implied anything more precise than the rest of Mr. Brooke's speech, Mr. Casaubon silently hoped that it referred to some occupation at a great distance from Lowick. He had disliked Will while he helped him, but he had begun to dislike him still more now that Will had declined his help. That is the way with us when we have any uneasy jealousy in our disposition: if our talents are chiefly of the burrowing kind, our honey-sipping cousin (whom we have grave reasons for objecting to) is likely to have a secret contempt for us, and any one who admires him passes an oblique criticism on ourselves. Having the scruples of rectitude in our souls, we are above the meanness of injuring him—rather we meet all his claims on us by active benefits; and the drawing of cheques for him, being a superiority which he must recognise, gives our bitterness a milder infusion. Now Mr. Casaubon had been deprived of that superiority (as anything more than a remembrance) in a sudden, capricious manner. His antipathy to Will did not spring from the common jealousy of a winter-worn husband: it was something deeper, bred by his lifelong claims and discontents; but Dorothea, now that she was present—Dorothea, as a young wife who herself had shown an offensive capability of criticism, necessarily gave concentration to the uneasiness which had before been vague.

Will Ladislaw on his side felt that his dislike was flourishing at the expense of his gratitude, and spent much inward discourse in justifying the dislike. Casaubon hated him—he knew that very well; on his first entrance he could discern a bitterness in the mouth and a venom in the glance which would almost justify declaring war in spite of past benefits. He was much obliged to Casaubon in the past, but really the act of marrying this wife was a set-off against the obligation. It was a question whether gratitude which refers to what is done for one's self ought not to give way to indignation at what is done against another. And Casaubon had done a wrong to Dorothea in marrying her. A man was bound to know himself better than that, and if he chose to grow grey crunching bones in a cavern, he had no business to be luring a girl into his companionship. "It is the most horrible of virgin-sacrifices," said Will; and he painted to himself what were Dorothea's inward sorrows as if he had been writing a choric wail. But he would never lose sight of her: he would watch over her—if he gave up everything else in life he would watch over her, and she should know that she had one slave in the world. Will had—to use Sir Thomas Browne's phrase—a "passionate prodigality" of statement both to himself and others. The simple truth was that nothing then invited him so strongly as the presence of Dorothea.

Invitations of the formal kind had been wanting, however, for Will had never been asked to go to Lowick. Mr. Brooke, indeed, confident of doing everything agreeable which Casaubon, poor fellow, was too much absorbed to think of, had arranged to bring Ladislaw to Lowick several times (not neglecting meanwhile to introduce him elsewhere on every opportunity as "a young relative of Casaubon's"). And though Will had not seen Dorothea alone, their interviews had been enough to restore her former sense of young companionship with one who was cleverer than herself, yet seemed ready to be swayed by her. Poor Dorothea before her marriage had never found much room in other minds for what she cared most to say; and she had not, as we know, enjoyed her husband's superior instruction so much as she had expected. If she spoke with any keenness of interest to Mr. Casaubon, he heard her with an air of patience as if she had given a quotation from the Delectus familiar to him from his tender years, and sometimes mentioned curtly what ancient sects or personages had held similar ideas, as if there were too much of that sort in stock already; at other times he would inform her that she was mistaken, and reassert what her remark had questioned.

But Will Ladislaw always seemed to see more in what she said than she herself saw. Dorothea had little vanity, but she had the ardent woman's need to rule beneficently by making the joy of another soul. Hence the mere chance of seeing Will occasionally was like a lunette opened in the wall of her prison, giving her a glimpse of the sunny air; and this pleasure began to nullify her original alarm at what her husband might think about the introduction of Will as her uncle's guest. On this subject Mr. Casaubon had remained dumb.

But Will wanted to talk with Dorothea alone, and was impatient of slow circumstance. However slight the terrestrial intercourse between Dante and Beatrice or Petrarch and Laura, time changes the proportion of things, and in later days it is preferable to have fewer sonnets and more conversation. Necessity excused stratagem, but stratagem was limited by the dread of offending Dorothea. He found out at last that he wanted to take a particular sketch at Lowick; and one morning when Mr. Brooke had to drive along the Lowick road on his way to the county town, Will asked to be set down with his sketch-book and camp-stool at Lowick, and without announcing himself at the Manor settled himself to sketch in a position where he must see Dorothea if she came out to walk—and he knew that she usually walked an hour in the morning.

But the stratagem was defeated by the weather. Clouds gathered with treacherous quickness, the rain came down, and Will was obliged to take shelter in the house. He intended, on the strength of relationship, to go into the drawing-room and wait there without being announced; and seeing his old acquaintance the butler in the hall, he said, "Don't mention that I am here, Pratt; I will wait till luncheon; I know Mr. Casaubon does not like to be disturbed when he is in the library."

"Master is out, sir; there's only Mrs. Casaubon in the library. I'd better tell her you're here, sir," said Pratt, a red-cheeked man given to lively converse with Tantripp, and often agreeing with her that it must be dull for Madam.

"Oh, very well; this confounded rain has hindered me from sketching," said Will, feeling so happy that he affected indifference with delightful ease.

In another minute he was in the library, and Dorothea was meeting him with her sweet unconstrained smile.

"Mr. Casaubon has gone to the Archdeacon's," she said, at once. "I don't know whether he will be at home again long before dinner. He was uncertain how long he should be. Did you want to say anything particular to him?"

"No; I came to sketch, but the rain drove me in. Else I would not have disturbed you yet. I supposed that Mr. Casaubon was here, and I know he dislikes interruption at this hour."

"I am indebted to the rain, then. I am so glad to see you." Dorothea uttered these common words with the simple sincerity of an unhappy child, visited at school.

"I really came for the chance of seeing you alone," said Will, mysteriously forced to be just as simple as she was. He could not stay to ask himself, why not? "I wanted to talk about things, as we did in Rome. It always makes a difference when other people are present."

"Yes," said Dorothea, in her clear full tone of assent. "Sit down." She seated herself on a dark ottoman with the brown books behind her, looking in her plain dress of some thin woollen-white material, without a single ornament on her besides her wedding-ring, as if she were under a vow to be different from all other women; and Will sat down opposite her at two yards' distance, the light falling on his bright curls and delicate but rather petulant profile, with its defiant curves of lip and chin. Each looked at the other as if they had been two flowers which had opened then and there. Dorothea for the moment forgot her husband's mysterious irritation against Will: it seemed fresh water at her thirsty lips to speak without fear to the one person whom she had found receptive; for in looking backward through sadness she exaggerated a past solace.

"I have often thought that I should like to talk to you again," she said, immediately. "It seems strange to me how many things I said to you."

"I remember them all," said Will, with the unspeakable content in his soul of feeling that he was in the presence of a creature worthy to be perfectly loved. I think his own feelings at that moment were perfect, for we mortals have our divine moments, when love is satisfied in the completeness of the beloved object.

"I have tried to learn a great deal since we were in Rome," said Dorothea. "I can read Latin a little, and I am beginning to understand just a little Greek. I can help Mr. Casaubon better now. I can find out references for him and save his eyes in many ways. But it is very difficult to be learned; it seems as if people were worn out on the way to great thoughts, and can never enjoy them because they are too tired."

"If a man has a capacity for great thoughts, he is likely to overtake them before he is decrepit," said Will, with irrepressible quickness. But through certain sensibilities Dorothea was as quick as he, and seeing her face change, he added, immediately, "But it is quite true that the best minds have been sometimes overstrained in working out their ideas."

"You correct me," said Dorothea. "I expressed myself ill. I should have said that those who have great thoughts get too much worn in working them out. I used to feel about that, even when I was a little girl; and it always seemed to me that the use I should like to make of my life would be to help some one who did great works, so that his burthen might be lighter."

Dorothea was led on to this bit of autobiography without any sense of making a revelation. But she had never before said anything to Will which threw so strong a light on her marriage. He did not shrug his shoulders; and for want of that muscular outlet he thought the more irritably of beautiful lips kissing holy skulls and other emptinesses ecclesiastically enshrined. Also he had to take care that his speech should not betray that thought.

"But you may easily carry the help too far," he said, "and get over-wrought yourself. You are not too much shut up? You already look paler. It would be better for Mr. Casaubon to have a secretary; he could easily get a man who would do half his work for him. It would save him more effectually, and you need only help him in lighter ways."

"How can you think of that?" said Dorothea, in a tone of earnest remonstrance. "I should have no happiness if I did not help him in his work. What could I do? There is no good to be done in Lowick. The only thing I desire is to help him more. And he objects to a secretary: please not to mention that again."

"Certainly not, now I know your feeling. But I have heard both Mr. Brooke and Sir James Chettam express the same wish."

"Yes," said Dorothea, "but they don't understand—they want me to be a great deal on horseback, and have the garden altered and new conservatories, to fill up my days. I thought you could understand that one's mind has other wants," she added, rather impatiently—"besides, Mr. Casaubon cannot bear to hear of a secretary."

"My mistake is excusable, said Will. "In old days I used to hear Mr. Casaubon speak as if he looked forward to having a secretary. Indeed he held out the prospect of that office to me. But I turned out to be—not good enough for it."

Dorothea was trying to extract out of this an excuse for her husband's evident repulsion, as she said, with a playful smile, "You were not a steady worker enough."

"No," said Will, shaking his head backward somewhat after the manner of a spirited horse. And then, the old irritable demon prompting him to give another good pinch at the moth-wings of poor Mr. Casaubon's glory, he went on, "And I have seen since that Mr. Casaubon does not like any one to overlook his work and know thoroughly what he is doing. He is too doubtful—too uncertain of himself. I may not be good for much, but he dislikes me because I disagree with him."

Will was not without his intentions to be always generous, but our tongues are little triggers which have usually been pulled before general intentions can be brought to bear. And it was too intolerable that Casaubon's dislike of him should not be fairly accounted for to Dorothea. Yet when he had spoken he was rather uneasy as to the effect on her.

But Dorothea was strangely quiet—not immediately indignant as she had been on a like occasion in Rome. And the cause lay deep. She was no longer struggling against the perception of facts, but adjusting herself to their clearest perception; and now when she looked steadily at her husband's failure, still more at his possible consciousness of failure, she seemed to be looking along the one track where duty became tenderness. Will's want of reticence might have been met with more severity, if he had not already been recommended to her mercy by her husband's dislike, which must seem hard to her till she saw better reason for it.

She did not answer at once, but after looking down ruminatingly she said, with some earnestness, "Mr. Casaubon must have overcome his dislike of you so far as his actions were concerned: and that is admirable."

"Yes; he has shown a sense of justice in family matters. It was an abominable thing that my grandmother should have been disinherited because she made what they called a *mésalliance*, though there was nothing to be said against her husband except that he was a Polish refugee who gave lessons for his bread."

"I wish I knew all about her!" said Dorothea. "I wonder how she bore the change from wealth to poverty: I wonder whether she was happy with her husband! Do you know much about them?"

"No: only that my grandfather was a patriot—a bright fellow—could speak many languages—musical—got his bread by teaching all sorts of things. They both died rather early. And I never knew much of my father, beyond what my mother told me; but he inherited the musical talents. I remember his slow walk and his long thin hands; and one day remains with me when he was lying ill, and I was very hungry, and had only a little bit of bread."

"Ah, what a different life from mine!" said Dorothea, with keen interest, clasping her hands on her lap. "I have always had too much of everything. But tell me how it was—Mr. Casaubon could not have known about you then."

"No; but my father had made himself known to Mr. Casaubon, and that was my last hungry day. My father died soon after, and my mother and I were well taken care of. Mr. Casaubon always expressly recognised it as his duty to take care of us because of the harsh injustice which had been shown to his mother's sister. But now I am telling you what is not new to you."

In his inmost soul Will was conscious of wishing to tell Dorothea what was rather new even in his own construction of things—namely, that Mr. Casaubon had never done more than pay a debt towards him. Will was much too good a fellow to be easy under the sense of being ungrateful. And when gratitude has become a matter of reasoning there are many ways of escaping from its bonds.

"No," answered Dorothea; "Mr. Casaubon has always avoided dwelling on his own honourable actions." She did not feel that her husband's conduct was depreciated; but this notion of what justice had required in his relations with Will Ladislaw took strong hold on her mind. After a moment's pause, she added, "He had never told me that he supported your mother. Is she still living?"

"No; she died by an accident—a fall—four years ago. It is curious that my mother, too, ran away from her family, but not for the sake of her husband. She never would tell me anything about her family, except that she forsook them to get her own living—went on the stage, in fact. She was a dark-eyed creature, with crisp ringlets, and never seemed to be getting old. You see I come of rebellious blood on both sides," Will ended, smiling brightly at Dorothea, while she was still looking with serious intentness before her, like a child seeing a drama for the first time.

But her face, too, broke into a smile as she said, "That is your apology, I suppose, for having yourself been rather rebellious; I mean, to Mr. Casaubon's wishes. You must remember that you have not done what he thought best for you. And if he dislikes you—you were speaking of dislike a little while ago—but I should rather say, if he has shown any painful feelings towards you, you must consider how sensitive he has become from the wearing effect of study. Perhaps," she continued, getting into a pleading tone, "my uncle has not told you how serious Mr. Casaubon's illness was. It would be very petty of us who are well and can bear things, to think much of small offences from those who carry a weight of trial."

"You teach me better," said Will. "I will never grumble on that subject again." There was a gentleness in his tone which came from the unutterable contentment of perceiving—what Dorothea was hardly conscious of—that she was travelling into the remoteness of pure pity and loyalty towards her husband. Will was ready to adore her pity and loyalty, if she would associate himself with her in manifesting them. "I have really sometimes been a perverse fellow," he went on, "but I will never again, if I can help it, do or say what you would disapprove."

"That is very good of you," said Dorothea, with another open smile. "I shall have a little kingdom then, where I shall give laws. But you will soon go away, out of my rule, I imagine. You will soon be tired of staying at the Grange."

"That is a point I wanted to mention to you—one of the reasons why I wished to speak to you alone. Mr. Brooke proposes that I should stay in this neighbourhood. He has bought one of the Middlemarch newspapers, and he wishes me to conduct that, and also to help him in other ways."

"Would not that be a sacrifice of higher prospects for you?" said Dorothea.

"Perhaps; but I have always been blamed for thinking of prospects, and not settling to anything. And here is something offered to me. If you would not like me to accept it, I will give it up. Otherwise I would rather stay in this part of the country than go away. I belong to nobody anywhere else."

"I should like you to stay very much," said Dorothea, at once, as simply and readily as she had spoken at Rome. There was not the shadow of a reason in her mind at the moment why she should not say so.

"Then I *will* stay," said Ladislaw, shaking his head backward, rising and going towards the window, as if to see whether the rain had ceased.

But the next moment, Dorothea, according to a habit which was getting continually stronger, began to reflect that her husband felt differently from herself, and she coloured deeply under the double embarrassment of having expressed what might be in opposition to her husband's feeling, and of having to suggest this opposition to Will. His face was not turned towards her, and this made it easier to say—

"But my opinion is of little consequence on such a subject. I think you should be guided by Mr. Casaubon. I spoke without thinking of anything else than my own feeling, which has nothing to do with the real question. But it now occurs to me—perhaps Mr. Casaubon might see that the proposal was not wise. Can you not wait now and mention it to him?"

"I can't wait to-day," said Will, inwardly scared by the possibility that Mr. Casaubon would enter. "The rain is quite over now. I told Mr. Brooke not to call for me: I would rather walk the five miles. I shall strike across Halsell Common, and see the gleams on the wet grass. I like that."

He approached her to shake hands quite hurriedly, longing but not daring to say, "Don't mention the subject to Mr. Casaubon." No, he dared not, could not say it. To ask her to be less simple and direct would be like breathing on the crystal that you want to see the light through. And there was always the other great dread—of himself becoming dimmed and for ever ray-shorn in her eyes.

"I wish you could have stayed," said Dorothea, with a touch of mournfulness, as she rose and put out her hand. She also had her thought which she did not like to express:—Will certainly ought to lose no time in consulting Mr. Casaubon's wishes, but for her to urge this might seem an undue dictation.

So they only said "Good-bye," and Will quitted the house, striking across the fields so as not to run any risk of encountering Mr. Casaubon's carriage, which, however, did not appear at the gate until four o'clock. That was an unpropitious hour for coming home: it was too early to gain the moral support under *ennui* of dressing his person for dinner, and too late to undress his mind of the day's frivolous ceremony and affairs, so as to be prepared for a good plunge into the serious business of study. On such occasions he usually threw himself into an easy-chair in the library, and allowed Dorothea to read the London papers to him, closing his eyes the while. To-day, however, he declined that relief, observing that he had already had too many public details urged upon him; but he spoke more cheerfully than usual, when Dorothea asked about his fatigue, and added with that air of formal effort which never forsook him even when he spoke without his waistcoat and cravat—

"I have had the gratification of meeting my former acquaintance, Dr. Spanning, to-day, and of being praised by one who is himself a worthy recipient of praise. He spoke very handsomely of my late tractate on the Egyptian Mysteries,—using, in fact, terms which it would not become me to repeat." In uttering the last clause, Mr. Casaubon leaned over the elbow of his chair, and swayed his head up and down, apparently as a muscular outlet instead of that recapitulation which would not have been becoming.

"I am very glad you have had that pleasure," said Dorothea, delighted to see her husband less weary than usual at this hour. "Before you came I had been regretting that you happened to be out to-day."

"Why so, my dear?" said Mr. Casaubon, throwing himself backward again.

"Because Mr. Ladislaw has been here; and he has mentioned a proposal of my uncle's which I should like to know your opinion of." Her husband she felt was really concerned in this question. Even with her ignorance of the world she had a vague impression that the position offered to Will was out of keeping with his family connections, and certainly Mr. Casaubon had a claim to be consulted. He did not speak, but merely bowed.

"Dear uncle, you know, has many projects. It appears that he has bought one of the Middlemarch newspapers, and he has asked Mr. Ladislaw to stay in this neighbourhood and conduct the paper for him, besides helping him in other ways."

Dorothea looked at her husband while she spoke, but he had at first blinked and finally closed his eyes, as if to save them; while his lips became more tense. "What is your opinion?" she added, rather timidly, after a slight pause.

"Did Mr. Ladislaw come on purpose to ask my opinion?" said Mr. Casaubon, opening his eyes narrowly with a knife-edged look at Dorothea. She was really uncomfortable on the point he inquired about, but she only became a little more serious, and her eyes did not swerve.

"No," she answered, immediately, "he did not say that he came to ask your opinion. But when he mentioned the proposal, he of course expected me to tell you of it."

Mr. Casaubon was silent.

"I feared that you might feel some objection. But certainly a young man with so much talent might be very useful to my uncle—might help him to do good in a better way. And Mr. Ladislaw wishes to have some fixed occupation. He has been blamed, he says, for not seeking something of that kind, and he would like to stay in this neighbourhood because no one cares for him elsewhere."

Dorothea felt that this was a consideration to soften her husband. However, he did not speak, and she presently recurred to Dr. Spanning and the Archdeacon's breakfast. But there was no longer sunshine on these subjects.

The next morning, without Dorothea's knowledge, Mr. Casaubon despatched the following letter, beginning "Dear Mr. Ladislaw" (he had always before addressed him as "Will"):—

"Mrs. Casaubon informs me that a proposal has been made to you, and (according to an inference by no means stretched) has on your part been in some degree entertained, which involves your residence in this neighbourhood in a capacity which I am justified in saying touches my own position in such a way as renders it not only natural and warrantable in me when that effect is viewed under the influence of legitimate feeling, but incumbent on me when the same effect is considered in the light of my responsibilities, to state at once that your acceptance of the proposal above indicated would be highly offensive to me. That I have some claim to the exercise of a veto here, would not, I believe, be denied by any reasonable person cognisant of the relations between us: relations which, though thrown into the past by your recent procedure, are not thereby annulled in their character of determining antecedents. I will not here make reflections on any person's judgment. It is enough for me to point out to yourself that there are certain social fitnesses and proprieties which should hinder a somewhat near relative of mine from becoming in anywise conspicuous in this vicinity in a status not only much beneath my own, but associated at best with the sciolism of literary or political adventurers. At any rate, the contrary issue must exclude you from further reception at my house.—Yours faithfully,

"EDWARD CASAUBON."

Meanwhile Dorothea's mind was innocently at work towards the further embitterment of her husband; dwelling, with a sympathy that grew to agitation, on what Will had told her about his parents and grand-parents. Any private hours in her day were usually spent in her blue-green boudoir, and she had come to be very fond of its pallid quaintness. Nothing had been outwardly altered there; but while the summer had gradually advanced over the western fields beyond the avenue of elms, the bare room had gathered within it those memories of an inward life which fill the air as with a cloud of good or bad angels, the invisible yet active forms of our spiritual triumphs or our spiritual falls. She had been so used to struggle for and to find resolve in looking along the avenue towards the arch of western light that the vision itself had gained a communicating power. Even the pale stag seemed to have reminding glances and to mean mutely, "Yes, we know." And the group of delicately-touched miniatures had made an audience as of beings no longer disturbed about their own earthly lot, but still humanly interested. Especially the mysterious "Aunt Julia" about whom Dorothea had never found it easy to question her husband.

And now, since her conversation with Will, many fresh images had gathered round that Aunt Julia who was Will's grandmother; the presence of that delicate miniature, so like a living face that she knew, helping to concentrate her feelings. What a wrong, to cut off the girl from the family protection and inheritance only because she had chosen a man who was poor! Dorothea, early troubling her elders with questions about the facts around her, had wrought herself into some independent clearness as to the historical, political reasons why eldest sons had superior rights, and why land should be entailed: those reasons, impressing her with a certain awe, might be weightier than she knew, but here was a question of ties which left them uninfringed. Here was a daughter whose child—even according to the ordinary aping of aristocratic institutions by people who are no more aristocratic than retired grocers, and who have no more land to "keep together" than a lawn and a paddock—would have a prior claim. Was inheritance a question of liking or of responsibility? All the energy of Dorothea's nature went on the side of responsibility—the fulfilment of claims founded on our own deeds, such as marriage and parentage.

It was true, she said to herself, that Mr. Casaubon had a debt to the Ladislaws—that he had to pay back what the Ladislaws had been wronged of. And now she began to think of her husband's will, which had been made at the time of their marriage, leaving the bulk of his property to her, with proviso in case of her having children. That ought to be altered; and no time ought to be lost. This very question which had just arisen about Will Ladislaw's occupation, was the occasion for placing things on a new, right footing. Her husband, she felt sure, according to all his previous conduct, would be ready to take the just view, if she proposed it—she, in whose interest an unfair concentration of the property had been urged. His sense of right had surmounted and would continue to surmount anything that might be called antipathy. She suspected that her uncle's scheme was disapproved by Mr. Casaubon, and this made it seem all the more opportune that a fresh understanding should be begun, so that instead of Will's starting penniless and accepting the first function that offered itself, he should find himself in possession of a rightful income which should be paid by her husband during his life, and, by an immediate alteration of the will, should be secured at his death. The vision of all this as what ought to be done seemed to Dorothea like a sudden letting in of daylight, waking her from her previous stupidity and incurious self-absorbed ignorance about her husband's relation to others. Will Ladislaw had refused Mr. Casaubon's future aid on a ground that no longer appeared right to her; and Mr. Casaubon had never himself seen fully what was the claim upon him. "But he will!" said Dorothea. "The great strength of his character lies here. And what are we doing with our money? We make no use of half of our income. My own money buys me nothing but an uneasy conscience."

There was a peculiar fascination for Dorothea in this division of property intended for herself, and always regarded by her as excessive. She was blind, you see, to many things obvious to others—likely to tread in the wrong places, as Celia had warned her; yet her blindness to whatever did not lie in her own pure purpose carried her safely by the side of precipices where vision would have been perilous with fear.

The thoughts which had gathered vividness in the solitude of her boudoir occupied her incessantly through the day on which Mr. Casaubon had sent his letter to Will. Everything seemed hindrance to her till she could find an opportunity of opening her heart to her husband. To his preoccupied mind all subjects were to be approached gently, and she had never since his illness lost from her consciousness the dread of agitating him. But when young ardour is set brooding over the conception of a prompt deed, the deed itself seems to start forth with independent life, mastering ideal obstacles. The day passed in a sombre fashion, not unusual, though Mr. Casaubon was perhaps unusually silent; but there were hours of the night which might be counted on as opportunities of conversation; for Dorothea, when aware of her husband's sleeplessness, had established the habit of rising, lighting a candle, and reading him to sleep again. And this night she was from the beginning sleepless, excited by resolves. He slept as usual for a few hours, but she had risen softly and had sat in the darkness for nearly an hour before he said—

"Dorothea, since you are up, will you light a candle?"

"Do you feel ill, dear?" was her first question, as she obeyed him.

"No, not at all; but I shall be obliged, since you are up, if you will read me a few pages of Lowth."

"May I talk to you a little, instead?" said Dorothea.

"Certainly."

"I have been thinking about money all day—that I have always had too much, and especially the prospect of too much."

"These, my dear Dorothea, are providential arrangements."

"But if one has too much in consequence of others being wronged, it seems to me that the divine voice which tells us to set that wrong right must be obeyed."

"What, my love, is the bearing of your remark?"

"That you have been too liberal in arrangements for me—I mean, with regard to property; and that makes me unhappy."

"How so? I have none but comparatively distant connections."

"I have been led to think about your aunt Julia, and how she was left in poverty only because she married a poor man, an act which was not disgraceful, since he was not unworthy. It was on that ground, I know, that you educated Mr. Ladislaw and provided for his mother."

Dorothea waited a few moments for some answer that would help her onward. None came, and her next words seemed the more forcible to her, falling clear upon the dark silence.

"But surely we should regard his claim as a much greater one, even to the half of that property which I know that you have destined for me. And I think he ought at once to be provided for on that understanding. It is not right that he should be in the dependence of poverty while we are rich. And if there is any objection to the proposal he mentioned, the giving him his true place and his true share would set aside any motive for his accepting it."

"Mr. Ladislaw has probably been speaking to you on this subject?" said Mr. Casaubon, with a certain biting quickness not habitual to him.

"Indeed, no!" said Dorothea, earnestly. "How can you imagine it, since he has so lately declined everything from you? I fear you think too hardly of him, dear. He only told me a little about his parents and grand-parents, and almost all in answer to my questions. You are so good, so just—you have done everything you thought to be right. But it seems to me clear that more than that is right; and I must speak about it, since I am the person who would get what is called benefit by that 'more' not being done."

There was a perceptible pause before Mr. Casaubon replied, not quickly as before, but with a still more biting emphasis.

"Dorothea, my love, this is not the first occasion, but it were well that it should be the last, on which you have assumed a judgment on subjects beyond your scope. Into the question how far conduct, especially in the matter of alliances, constitutes a forfeiture of family claims, I do not now enter. Suffice it, that you are not here qualified to discriminate. What I now wish you to understand is, that I accept no revision, still less dictation within that range of affairs which I have deliberated upon as distinctly and properly mine. It is not for you to interfere between me and Mr. Ladislaw, and still less to encourage communications from him to you which constitute a criticism on my procedure."

Poor Dorothea, shrouded in the darkness, was in a tumult of conflicting emotions. Alarm at the possible effect on himself of her husband's strongly-manifested anger, would have checked any expression of her own resentment, even if she had been quite free from doubt and compunction under the consciousness that there might be some justice in his last insinuation. Hearing him breathe quickly after he had spoken, she sat listening, frightened, wretched—with a dumb inward cry for help to bear this nightmare of a life in which every energy was arrested by dread. But nothing else happened, except that they both remained a long while sleepless, without speaking again.

The next day, Mr. Casaubon received the following answer from Will Ladislaw :—

"DEAR MR. CASAUBON,—I have given all due consideration to your letter of yesterday, but I am unable to take precisely your view of our mutual position. With the fullest acknowledgment of your generous conduct to me in the past, I must still maintain that an obligation of this kind cannot fairly fetter me as you appear to expect that it should. Granted that a benefactor's wishes may constitute a claim ; there must always be a reservation as to the quality of those wishes. They may possibly clash with more imperative considerations. Or a benefactor's veto might impose such a negation on a man's life that the consequent blank might be more cruel than the benefaction was energous. I am merely using strong illustrations. In the present case I am unable to take your view of the bearing which my acceptance of occupation—not enriching certainly, but not dishonourable—will have on your own position, which seems to me too substantial to be affected in that shadowy manner. And though I do not believe that any change in our relations will occur (certainly none has yet occurred) which can nullify the obligations imposed on me by the past, pardon me for not seeing that those obligations should restrain me from using the ordinary freedom of living where I choose, and maintaining myself by any lawful occupation I may choose. Regretting that there exists this difference between us as to a relation in which the conferring of benefits has been entirely on your side—I remain, yours with persistent obligation,

WILL LADISLAW."

Poor Mr. Casaubon felt (and must not we, being impartial, feel with him a little ?) that no man had juster cause for disgust and suspicion than he. Young Ladislaw, he was sure, meant to defy and annoy him, meant to win Dorothea's confidence and sow her mind with disrespect, and perhaps aversion, towards her husband. Some motive beneath the surface had been needed to account for Will's sudden change of course in rejecting Mr. Casaubon's aid and quitting his travels ; and this defiant determination to fix himself in the neighbourhood by taking up something so much at variance with his former choice as Mr. Brooke's Middlemarch projects, revealed clearly enough that the undeclared motive had relation to Dorothea. Not for one moment did Mr. Casaubon suspect Dorothea of any doubleness : he had no suspicions of her, but he had (what was little less uncomfortable) the positive knowledge that her tendency to form opinions about her husband's conduct was accompanied with a disposition to regard Will Ladislaw favourably and be influenced by what he said. His own proud reticence had prevented him from ever being undeceived in the supposition that Dorothea had originally asked her uncle to invite Will to his house.

And now, on receiving Will's letter, Mr. Casaubon had to consider his duty. He would never have been easy to call his action anything else than duty ; but in this case, contending motives thrust him back into negations.

Should he apply directly to Mr. Brooke, and demand of that troublesome gentleman to revoke his proposal ? Or should he consult Sir James Chettam, and get him to concur in remonstrance against a step which touched the whole family ? In either case Mr. Casaubon was aware that failure was just as probable as success. It was impossible for him to mention Dorothea's name in the matter, and without some alarming urgency Mr. Brooke was as likely as not, after meeting all representations with apparent assent, to wind up by saying, "Never fear, Casaubon ! Depend upon it, young Ladislaw will do you credit. Depend upon it, I have put my finger on the right thing." And Mr. Casaubon shrank nervously from communicating on the subject with Sir James Chettam, between whom and himself there had never been any cordiality, and who would immediately think of Dorothea without any mention of her.

Poor Mr. Casaubon was distrustful of everybody's feeling towards him, especially as a husband. To let any one suppose that he was jealous would be to admit their (suspected) view of his disadvantages: to let them know that he did not find marriage particularly blissful would imply his conversion to their (probably) earlier disapproval. It would be as bad as letting Carp, and Brasenose generally, know how backward he was in organising the matter for his 'Key to all Mythologies.' All through his life Mr. Casaubon had been trying not to admit even to himself the inward sores of self-doubt and jealousy. And on the most delicate of all personal subjects, the habit of proud suspicious reticence told doubly.

Thus Mr. Casaubon remained proudly, bitterly silent. But he had forbidden Will to come to Lowick Manor, and he was mentally preparing other measures of frustration.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

> "C'est beaucoup que le jugement des hommes sur les actions humaines; tôt ou tard il devient efficace."—GUIZOT.

SIR JAMES CHETTAM could not look with any satisfaction on Mr. Brooke's new courses; but it was easier to object than to hinder. Sir James accounted for his having come in alone one day to lunch with the Cadwalladers by saying—

"I can't talk to you as I want, before Celia: it might hurt her. Indeed, it would not be right."

"I know what you mean—the 'Pioneer' at the Grange!" darted in Mrs. Cadwallader, almost before the last word was off her friend's tongue. "It is frightful—this taking to buying whistles and blowing them in everybody's hearing. Lying in bed all day and playing at dominoes, like poor Lord Plessy, would be more private and bearable."

"I see they are beginning to attack our friend Brooke in the 'Trumpet,'" said the Rector, lounging back and smiling easily, as he would have done if he had been attacked himself. "There are tremendous sarcasms against a Landlord not a hundred miles from Middlemarch, who receives his own rents, and makes no returns."

"I do wish Brooke would leave that off," said Sir James, with his little frown of annoyance.

"Is he really going to be put in nomination, though?" said Mr. Cadwallader. "I saw Farebrother yesterday—he's Whiggish himself, hoists Brougham and Useful Knowledge; that's the worst I know of him;—and he says that Brooke is getting up a pretty strong party. Bulstrode, the banker, is his foremost man. But he thinks Brooke would come off badly at a nomination."

"Exactly," said Sir James, with earnestness. "I have been inquiring into the thing, for I've never known anything about Middlemarch politics before—the county being my business. What Brooke trusts to, is that they are going to turn out Oliver because he is a Peelite. But Hawley tells me that if they send up a Whig at all it is sure to be Bagster, one of those candidates who come from heaven knows where, but dead against Ministers, and an experienced Parliamentary man. Hawley's rather rough: he forgot that he was speaking to me. He said if Brooke wanted a pelting, he could get it cheaper than by going to the hustings."

"I warned you all of it," said Mrs. Cadwallader, waving her hands outward. "I said to Humphrey long ago, Mr. Brooke is going to make a splash in the mud. And now he has done it."

"Well, he might have taken it into his head to marry," said the Rector. "That would have been a graver mess than a little flirtation with politics."

"He may do that afterwards," said Mrs. Cadwallader—"when he has come out on the other side of the mud with an ague."

"What I care for most is his own dignity," said Sir James. "Of course I care the more because of the family. But he's getting on in life now, and I don't like to think of his exposing himself. They will be raking up everything against him."

"I suppose it's no use trying any persuasion," said the Rector. "There's such an odd mixture of obstinacy and changeableness in Brooke. Have you tried him on the subject?"

"Well, no," said Sir James; "I feel a delicacy in appearing to dictate. But I have been talking to this young Ladislaw that Brooke is making a factotum of. Ladislaw seems clever enough for anything. I thought it as well to hear what he had to say; and he is against Brooke's standing this time. I think he'll turn him round: I think the nomination may be staved off."

"I know," said Mrs. Cadwallader, nodding. "The independent member hasn't got his speeches well enough by heart."

"But this Ladislaw—there again is a vexatious business," said Sir James. "We have had him two or three times to dine at the Hall (you have met him, by the by) as Brooke's guest and a relation of Casaubon's, thinking he was only on a flying visit. And now I find he's in everybody's mouth in Middlemarch as the editor of the 'Pioneer.' There are stories going about him as a quill-driving alien, a foreign emissary, and what not."

"Casaubon won't like that," said the Rector.

"There *is* some foreign blood in Ladislaw," returned Sir James. "I hope he won't go into extreme opinions and carry Brooke on."

"Oh, he's a dangerous young sprig, that Mr. Ladislaw," said Mrs. Cadwallader, "with his opera songs and his ready tongue. A sort of Byronic hero—an amorous conspirator, it strikes me. And Thomas Aquinas is not fond of him. I could see that, the day the picture was brought."

"I don't like to begin on the subject with Casaubon," said Sir James. "He has more right to interfere than I. But it's a disagreeable affair all round. What a character for anybody with decent connections to show himself in!—one of those newspaper fellows! You have only to look at Keck, who manages the 'Trumpet.' I saw him the other day with Hawley. His writing is sound enough, I believe, but he's such a low fellow, that I wished he had been on the wrong side."

"What can you expect with these peddling Middlemarch papers?" said the Rector. "I don't suppose you could get a high style of man anywhere to be writing up interests he doesn't really care about, and for pay that hardly keeps him in at elbows."

"Exactly: that makes it so annoying that Brooke should have put a man who has a sort of connection with the family in a position of that kind. For my part, I think Ladislaw is rather a fool for accepting."

"It is Aquinas's fault," said Mrs. Cadwallader. "Why didn't he use his interest to get Ladislaw made an *attaché* or sent to India? That is how families get rid of troublesome sprigs."

"There is no knowing to what lengths the mischief may go," said Sir James, anxiously. "But if Casaubon says nothing, what can I do?"

"Oh, my dear Sir James," said the Rector, "don't let us make too much of all this. It is likely enough to end in mere smoke. After a month or two Brooke and this Master Ladislaw will get tired of each other; Ladislaw will take wing; Brooke will sell the 'Pioneer,' and everything will settle down again as usual."

"There is one good chance—that he will not like to feel his money oozing away," said Mrs. Cadwallader. "If I knew the items of election expenses I could scare him. It's no use plying him with wide words like Expenditure: I wouldn't talk of phlebotomy, I would empty a pot of leeches upon him. What we good stingy people don't like, is having our sixpences sucked away from us."

"And he will not like having things raked up against him," said Sir James. "There is the management of his estate. They have begun upon that already. And it really is painful for me to see. It is a nuisance under one's very nose. I do think one is bound to do the best for one's land and tenants, especially in these hard times."

"Perhaps the 'Trumpet' may rouse him to make a change, and some good may come of it all," said the Rector. "I know I should be glad. I should hear less grumbling when my tithe is paid. I don't know what I should do if there were not a modus in Tipton."

"I want him to have a proper man to look after things—I want him to take on Garth again," said Sir James. "He got rid of Garth twelve years ago, and everything has been going wrong since. I think of getting Garth to manage for me—he has made such a capital plan for my buildings; and Lovegood is hardly up to the mark. But Garth would not undertake the Tipton estate again unless Brooke left it entirely to him."

"In the right of it too," said the Rector. "Garth is an independent fellow: an original, simple-minded fellow. One day, when he was doing some valuation for me, he told me point-blank that clergymen seldom understood anything about business, and did mischief when they meddled; but he said it as quietly and respectfully as if he had been talking to me about sailors. He would make a different parish of Tipton, if Brooke would let him manage. I wish, by the help of the 'Trumpet,' you could bring that round."

"If Dorothea had kept near her uncle, there would have been some chance," said Sir James. "She might have got some power over him in time, and she was always uneasy about the estate. She had wonderfully good notions about such things. But now Casaubon takes her up entirely. Celia complains a good deal. We can hardly get her to dine with us, since he had that fit." Sir James ended with a look of pitying disgust, and Mrs. Cadwallader shrugged her shoulders as much as to say that *she* was not likely to see anything new in that direction.

"Poor Casaubon!" the Rector said. "That was a nasty attack. I thought he looked shattered the other day at the Archdeacon's."

"In point of fact," resumed Sir James, not choosing to dwell on "fits," "Brooke doesn't mean badly by his tenants or any one else, but he has got that way of paring and clipping at expenses."

"Come, that's a blessing," said Mrs. Cadwallader. "That helps him to find himself in a morning. He may not know his own opinions, but he does know his own pocket."

"I don't believe a man is in pocket by stinginess on his land," said Sir James.

"Oh, stinginess may be abused like other virtues: it will not do to keep one's own pigs lean," said Mrs. Cadwallader, who had risen to look out of the window. "But talk of an independent politician and he will appear."

"What, Brooke?" said her husband.

"Yes. Now, you ply him with the 'Trumpet,' Humphrey; and I will put the leeches on him. What will you do, Sir James?"

"The fact is, I don't like to begin about it with Brooke, in our mutual position; the whole thing is so unpleasant. I do wish people would behave like gentlemen," said the good baronet, feeling that this was a simple and comprehensive programme for social well-being.

"Here you all are, eh?" said Mr. Brooke, shuffling round and shaking hands. "I was going up to the hall by-and-by, Chettam. But it's pleasant to find everybody, you know. Well, what do you think of things?—going on a little fast! It was true enough, what Lafitte said—'Since yesterday, a century has passed away:'—they're in the next century, you know, on the other side of the water. Going on faster than we are."

"Why, yes," said the Rector, taking up the newspaper.

"Here is the 'Trumpet' accusing you of lagging behind—did you see?"

"Eh? no," said Mr. Brooke, dropping his gloves into his hat and hastily adjusting his eye-glass. But Mr. Cadwallader kept the paper in his hand, saying, with a smile in his eyes—

"Look here! all this is about a landlord not a hundred miles from Middlemarch, who receives his own rents. They say he is the most retrogressive man in the county. I think you must have taught them that word in the 'Pioneer.'"

"Oh, that is Keck—an illiterate fellow, you know. Retrogressive, now! Come, that's capital. He thinks it means destructive: they want to make me out a destructive, you know," said Mr. Brooke, with that cheerfulness which is usually sustained by an adversary's ignorance.

"I think he knows the meaning of the word. Here is a sharp stroke or two. *If we had to describe a man who is retrogressive in the most evil sense of the word—we should say, he is one who would dub himself a reformer of our constitution, while every interest for which he is immediately responsible is going to decay: a philanthropist who cannot bear one rogue to be hanged, but does not mind five honest tenants being half-starved: a man who shrieks at corruption, and keeps his farms at rack-rent: who roars himself red at rotten boroughs, and does not mind if every field on his farms has a rotten gate: a man very open-hearted to Leeds and Manchester, no doubt; he would give any number of representatives who will pay for their seats out of their own pockets: what he objects to giving, is a little return on rent-days to help a tenant to buy stock, or an outlay on repairs to keep the weather out at a tenant's barn-door or make his house look a little less like an Irish cottier's. But we all know the wag's definition of a philanthropist: a man whose charity increases directly as the square of the distance.* And so on. All the rest is to show what sort of legislator a philanthropist is likely to make," ended the Rector, throwing down the paper, and clasping his hands at the back of his head, while he looked at Mr. Brooke with an air of amused neutrality.

"Come, that's rather good you know," said Mr. Brooke, taking up the paper and trying to bear the attack as easily as his neighbour did, but colouring and smiling rather nervously; "that about roaring himself red at rotten boroughs—I never made a speech about rotten boroughs in my life. And as to roaring myself red and that kind of thing—these men never understand what is good satire. Satire, you know, should be true up to a certain point. I recollect they said that in 'The Edinburgh' somewhere—it must be true up to a certain point."

"Well, that is really a hit about the gates," said Sir James, anxious to tread carefully. "Dagley complained to me the other day that he hadn't got a decent gate on his farm. Garth has invented a new pattern of gate—I wish you would try it. One ought to use some of one's timber in that way."

"You go in for fancy farming, you know, Chettam," said Mr. Brooke, appearing to glance over the columns of the 'Trumpet.' "That's your hobby, and you don't mind the expense."

"I thought the most expensive hobby in the world was standing for Parliament," said Mrs. Cadwallader. "They said the last unsuccessful candidate at Middlemarch—Giles, wasn't his name?—spent ten thousand pounds and failed because he did not bribe enough. What a bitter reflection for a man!"

"Somebody was saying," said the Rector, laughingly, "that East Retford was nothing to Middlemarch, for bribery."

"Nothing of the kind," said Mr. Brooke. "The Tories bribe, you know: Hawley and his set bribe with treating, hot codlings, and that sort of thing; and they bring the voters drunk to the poll. But they are not going to have it their own way in future—not in future, you know. Middlemarch is a little backward, I admit—the freemen are a little backward. But we shall educate them—we shall bring them on, you know. The best people there are on our side."

"Hawley says you have men on your side who will do you harm," remarked Sir James. "He says Bulstrode the banker will do you harm."

"And that if you got pelted," interposed Mrs. Cadwallader, "half the rotten eggs would mean hatred of your committee-man. Good heavens! Think what it must be to be pelted for wrong opinions. And I seem to remember a story of a man they pretended to chair and let him fall into a dust-heap on purpose!"

"Pelting is nothing to their finding holes in one's coat," said the Rector. "I confess that's what I should be afraid of, if we parsons had to stand at the hustings for preferment. I should be afraid of their reckoning up all my fishing days. Upon my word, I think the truth is the hardest missile one can be pelted with."

"The fact is," said Sir James, "if a man goes into public life he must be prepared for the consequences. He must make himself proof against calumny."

"My dear Chettam, that is all very fine, you know," said Mr. Brooke. "But how will you make yourself proof against calumny? You should read history—look at ostracism, persecution, martyrdom, and that kind of thing. They always happen to the best men, you know. But what is that in Horace?—*fiat justitia, ruat* . . . something or other."

"Exactly," said Sir James, with a little more heat than usual. "What I mean by being proof against calumny is being able to point to the fact as a contradiction."

"And it is not martyrdom to pay bills that one has run into one's self," said Mrs. Cadwallader.

But it was Sir James's evident annoyance that most stirred Mr. Brooke. "Well, you know, Chettam," he said, rising, taking up his hat and leaning on his stick, "you and I have a different system. You are all for outlay with your farms. I don't want to make out that my system is good under all circumstances—under all circumstances, you know."

"There ought to be a new valuation made from time to time," said Sir James. "Returns are very well occasionally, but I like a fair valuation. What do you say, Cadwallader?"

"I agree with you. If I were Brooke, I would choke the 'Trumpet' at once by getting Garth to make a new valuation of the farms, and giving him *carte blanche* about gates and repairs: that's my view of the political situation," said the Rector, broadening himself by sticking his thumbs in his armholes, and laughing towards Mr. Brooke.

"That's a showy sort of thing to do, you know," said Mr. Brooke. "But I should like you to tell me of another landlord who has distressed his tenants for arrears as little as I have. I let the old tenants stay on. I'm uncommonly easy, let me tell you—uncommonly easy. I have my own ideas, and I take my stand on them, you know. A man who does that is always charged with eccentricity, inconsistency, and that kind of thing. When I change my line of action, I shall follow my own ideas."

After that, Mr. Brooke remembered that there was a packet which he had omitted to send off from the Grange, and he bade everybody hurriedly good-bye.

"I didn't want to take a liberty with Brooke," said Sir James; "I see he is nettled. But as to what he says about old tenants, in point of fact no new tenant would take the farms on the present terms."

"I have a notion that he will be brought round in time," said the Rector. "But you were pulling one way, Elinor, and we were pulling another. You wanted to frighten him away from expense, and we want to frighten him into it. Better let him try to be popular and see that his character as a landlord stands in his way. I don't think it signifies two straws about the 'Pioneer,' or Ladislaw, or Brooke's speechifying to the Middlemarchers. But it does signify about the parishioners in Tipton being comfortable."

"Excuse me, it is you two who are on the wrong tack," said Mrs. Cadwallader. "You should have proved to him that he loses money by bad management, and then we all should have pulled together. If you put him a-horseback on politics, I warn you of the consequences. It was all very well to ride on sticks at home and call them ideas."

CHAPTER XXXIX

"If, as I have, you also doe,
  Vertue attired in woman see,
And dare love that, and say so too,
  And forget the He and She;

And if this love, though placed so,
  From prophane men you hide,
Which will no faith on this bestow,
  Or, if they doe, deride:

Then you have done a braver thing
  Than all the Worthies did,
And a braver thence will spring,
  Which is, to keep that hid."
—DR. DONNE.

SIR JAMES CHETTAM's mind was not fruitful in devices, but his growing anxiety to "act on Brooke," once brought close to his constant belief in Dorothea's capacity for influence, became formative and issued in a little plan; namely, to plead Celia's indisposition as a reason for fetching Dorothea by herself to the Hall, and to leave her at the Grange with the carriage on the way, after making her fully aware of the situation concerning the management of the estate.

In this way it happened that one day near four o'clock, when Mr. Brooke and Ladislaw were seated in the library, the door opened and Mrs. Casaubon was announced.

Will, the moment before, had been low in the depths of boredom, and, obliged to help Mr. Brooke in arranging "documents" about hanging sheep-stealers, was exemplifying the power our minds have of riding several horses at once by inwardly arranging measures towards getting a lodging for himself in Middlemarch and cutting short his constant residence at the Grange; while there flitted through all these steadier images a tickling vision of a sheep-stealing epic written with Homeric particularity. When Mrs. Casaubon was announced he started up as from an electric shock, and felt a tingling at his finger-ends. Any one observing him would have seen a change in his complexion, in the adjustment of his facial muscles, in the vividness of his glance, which might have made them imagine that every molecule in his body had passed the message of a magic touch. And so it had. For effective magic is transcendent nature; and who shall measure the subtlety of those touches which convey the quality of soul as well as body, and make a man's passion for one woman differ from his passion for another as joy in the morning light over valley and river and white mountain-top differs from joy among Chinese lanterns and glass pannels? Will, too, was made of very impressible stuff. The bow of a violin drawn near him cleverly, would at one stroke change the aspect of the world for him, and his point of view shifted as easily as his mood. Dorothea's entrance was the freshness of morning.

"Well, my dear, this is pleasant, now," said Mr. Brooke, meeting and kissing her. "You have left Casaubon with his books, I suppose. That's right. We must not have you getting too learned for a woman, you know."

"There is no fear of that, uncle," said Dorothea, turning to Will and shaking hands with open cheerfulness, while she made no other form of greeting, but went on answering her uncle. "I am very slow. When I want to be busy with books, I am often playing truant among my thoughts. I find it is not so easy to be learned as to plan cottages."

She seated herself beside her uncle opposite to Will, and was evidently preoccupied with something that made her almost unmindful of him. He was ridiculously disappointed, as if he had imagined that her coming had anything to do with him.

"Why, yes, my dear, it was quite your hobby to draw plans. But it was good to break that off a little. Hobbies are apt to run away with us, you know; it doesn't do to be run away with. We must keep the reins. I have never let myself be run away with; I always pulled up. That is what I tell Ladislaw. He and I are alike, you know: he likes to go into everything. We are working at capital punishment. We shall do a great deal together, Ladislaw and I."

"Yes," said Dorothea, with characteristic directness, "Sir James has been telling me that he is in hope of seeing a great change made soon in your management of the estate—that you are thinking of having the farms valued, and repairs made, and the cottages improved, so that Tipton may look quite another place. Oh, how happy!"—she went on, clasping her hands, with a return to that more childlike impetuous manner which had been subdued since her marriage. "If I were at home still, I should take to riding again, that I might go about with you and see all that! And you are going to engage Mr. Garth, who praised my cottages, Sir James says."

"Chettam is a little hasty, my dear," said Mr. Brooke, colouring slightly. "A little hasty, you know. I never said I should do anything of the kind. I never said I should *not* do it, you know."

"He only feels confident that you will do it," said Dorothea, in a voice as clear and unhesitating as that of a young chorister chanting a *credo*, "because you mean to enter Parliament as a member who cares for the improvement of the people, and one of the first things to be made better is the state of the land and the labourers. Think of Kit Downes, uncle, who lives with his wife and seven children in a house with one sitting-room and one bed-room hardly larger than this table!—and those poor Dagleys, in their tumble-down farmhouse, where they live in the back kitchen and leave the other rooms to the rats! That is one reason why I did not like the pictures here, dear uncle—which you think me stupid about. I used to come from the village with all that dirt and coarse ugliness like a pain within me, and the simpering pictures in the drawing-room seemed to me like a wicked attempt to find delight in what is false, while we don't mind how hard the truth is for the neighbours outside our walls. I think we have no right to come forward and urge wider changes for good, until we have tried to alter the evils which lie under our own hands."

Dorothea had gathered emotion as she went on, and had forgotten everything except the relief of pouring forth her feelings, unchecked: an experience once habitual with her, but hardly ever present since her marriage, which had been a perpetual struggle of energy with fear. For the moment, Will's admiration was accompanied with a chilling sense of remoteness. A man is seldom ashamed of feeling that he cannot love a woman so well when he sees a certain greatness in her: nature having intended greatness for men. But nature has sometimes made sad oversights in carrying out her intentions; as in the case of good Mr. Brooke, whose masculine consciousness was at this moment in rather a stammering condition under the eloquence of his niece. He could not immediately find any other mode of expressing himself than that of rising, fixing his eye-glass, and fingering the papers before him. At last he said—

"There is something in what you say, my dear, something in what you say—but not everything—eh, Ladislaw? You and I don't like our pictures and statues being found fault with. Young ladies are a little ardent, you know—a little one-sided, my dear. Fine art, poetry, that kind of thing, elevates a nation—*emollit mores*—you understand a little Latin now. But——eh, what?"

These interrogatives were addressed to the footman who had come in to say that the keeper had found one of Dagley's boys with a leveret in his hand, just killed.

"I'll come, I'll come. I shall let him off easily, you know," said Mr. Brooke aside to Dorothea, shuffling away very cheerfully.

"I hope you feel how right this change is that I—that Sir James wishes for," said Dorothea to Will, as soon as her uncle was gone.

"I do, now I have heard you speak about it. I shall not forget what you have said. But can you think of something else at this moment? I may not have another opportunity of speaking to you about what has occurred," said Will, rising with a movement of impatience, and holding the back of his chair with both hands.

"Pray tell me what it is," said Dorothea, anxiously, also rising and going to the open window, where Monk was looking in, panting and wagging his tail. She leaned her back against the window-frame, and laid her hand on the dog's head; for though, as we know, she was not fond of pets that must be held in the hands or trodden on, she was always attentive to the feelings of dogs, and very polite if she had to decline their advances.

Will followed her only with his eyes and said, "I presume you know that Mr. Casaubon has forbidden me to go to his house."

"No, I did not," said Dorothea, after a moment's pause. She was evidently much moved. "I am very, very sorry," she added, mournfully. She was thinking of what Will had no knowledge of—the conversation between her and her husband in the darkness; and she was anew smitten with hopelessness that she could influence Mr. Casaubon's action. But the marked expression of her sorrow convinced Will that it was not all given to him personally, and that Dorothea had not been visited by the idea that Mr. Casaubon's dislike and jealousy of him turned upon herself. He felt an odd mixture of delight and vexation: of delight that he could dwell and be cherished in her thought as in a pure home, without suspicion and without stint—of vexation because he was of too little account with her, was not formidable enough, was treated with an unhesitating benevolence which did not flatter him. But his dread of any change in Dorothea was stronger than his discontent, and he began to speak again in a tone of mere explanation.

"Mr. Casaubon's reason is, his displeasure at my taking a position here which he considers unsuited to my rank as his cousin. I have told him that I cannot give way on this point. It is a little too hard on me to expect that my course in life is to be hampered by prejudices which I think ridiculous. Obligation may be stretched till it is no better than a brand of slavery stamped on us when we were too young to know its meaning. I would not have accepted the position if I had not meant to make it useful and honourable. I am not bound to regard family dignity in any other light."

Dorothea felt wretched. She thought her husband altogether in the wrong, on more grounds than Will had mentioned.

"It is better for us not to speak on the subject," she said, with a tremulousness not common in her voice, "since you and Mr. Casaubon disagree. You intend to remain?" She was looking out on the lawn, with melancholy meditation.

"Yes; but I shall hardly ever see you now," said Will, in a tone of almost boyish complaint.

"No," said Dorothea, turning her eyes full upon him, "hardly ever. But I shall hear of you. I shall know what you are doing for my uncle."

"I shall know hardly anything about you," said Will. "No one will tell me anything."

"Oh, my life is very simple," said Dorothea, her lips curling with an exquisite smile, which irradiated her melancholy. "I am always at Lowick."

"That is a dreadful imprisonment," said Will, impetuously.

"No, don't think that," said Dorothea. "I have no longings."

He did not speak, but she replied to some change in his expression. "I mean, for myself. Except that I should like not to have so much more than my share without doing anything for others. But I have a belief of my own, and it comforts me."

"What is that?" said Will, rather jealous of the belief.

"That by desiring what is perfectly good, even when we don't quite know what it is and cannot do what we would, we are part of the divine power against evil—widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower."

"That is a beautiful mysticism—it is a——"

"Please not to call it by any name," said Dorothea, putting out her hands entreatingly. "You will say it is Persian, or something else geographical. It is my life. I have found it out, and cannot part with it. I have always been finding out my religion since I was a little girl. I used to pray so much—now I hardly ever pray. I try not to have desires merely for myself, because they may not be good for others, and I have too much already. I only told you, that you might know quite well how my days go at Lowick."

"God bless you for telling me!" said Will, ardently, and rather wondering at himself. They were looking at each other like two fond children who were talking confidentially of birds.

"What is *your* religion?" said Dorothea. "I mean—not what you know about religion, but the belief that helps you most?"

"To love what is good and beautiful when I see it," said Will. "But I am a rebel: I don't feel bound, as you do, to submit to what I don't like."

"But if you like what is good, that comes to the same thing," said Dorothea, smiling.

"Now you are subtle," said Will.

"Yes; Mr. Casaubon often says I am too subtle. I don't feel as if I were subtle," said Dorothea, playfully. "But how long my uncle is! I must go and look for him. I must really go on to the Hall. Celia is expecting me."

Will offered to tell Mr. Brooke, who presently came and said that he would step into the carriage and go with Dorothea as far as Dagley's, to speak about the small delinquent who had been caught with the leveret. Dorothea renewed the subject of the estate as they drove along, but Mr. Brooke, not being taken unawares, got the talk under his own control.

"Chettam, now," he replied; "he finds fault with me, my dear; but I should not preserve my game if it were not for

Chettam, and he can't say that *that* expense is for the sake of the tenants, you know. It's a little against my feeling:—poaching, now, if you come to look into it—I have often thought of getting up the subject. Not long ago, Flavell, the Methodist preacher, was brought up for knocking down a hare that came across his path when he and his wife were walking out together. He was pretty quick, and knocked it on the neck."

"That was very brutal, I think," said Dorothea.

"Well, now, it seemed rather black to me, I confess, in a Methodist preacher, you know. And Johnson said, 'You may judge what a hypo*crite* he is.' And upon my word, I thought Flavell looked very little like 'the highest style of man'—as somebody calls the Christian—Young, the poet Young, I think—you know Young? Well, now, Flavell in his shabby black gaiters, pleading that he thought the Lord had sent him and his wife a good dinner, and he had a right to knock it down, though not a mighty hunter before the Lord, as Nimrod was—I assure you it was rather comic: Fielding would have made something of it—or Scott, now—Scott might have worked it up. But really, when I came to think of it, I couldn't help liking that the fellow should have a bit of hare to say grace over. It's all a matter of prejudice—prejudice with the law on its side, you know—about the stick and the gaiters, and so on. However, it doesn't do to reason about things; and law is law. But I got Johnson to be quiet, and I hushed the matter up. I doubt whether Chettam would not have been more severe, and yet he comes down on me as if I were the hardest man in the county. But here we are at Dagley's."

Mr. Brooke got down at a farmyard-gate, and Dorothea drove on. It is wonderful how much uglier things will look when we only suspect that we are blamed for them. Even our own persons in the glass are apt to change their aspect for us after we have heard some frank remark on their less admirable points; and on the other hand it is astonishing how pleasantly conscience takes our encroachments on those who never complain or have nobody to complain for them. Dagley's homestead never before looked so dismal to Mr. Brooke as it did to-day, with his mind thus sore about the fault-finding of the "Trumpet," echoed by Sir James.

It is true that an observer, under that softening influence of the fine arts which makes other people's hardships picturesque, might have been delighted with this homestead called Freeman's End: the old house had dormer-windows in the dark-red roof, two of the chimneys were choked with ivy, the large porch was blocked up with bundles of sticks, and half the windows were closed with grey worm-eaten shutters about which the jasmine-boughs grew in wild luxuriance; the mouldering garden wall with hollyhocks peeping over it was a perfect study of highly-mingled subdued colour, and there was an aged goat (kept doubtless on interesting superstitious grounds) lying against the open back-kitchen door. The mossy thatch of the cow-shed, the broken grey barn-doors, the pauper labourers in ragged breeches who had nearly finished unloading a waggon of corn into the barn ready for early thrashing; the scanty dairy of cows being tethered for milking and leaving one half of the shed in brown emptiness; the very pigs and white ducks seeming to wander about the uneven neglected yard as if in low spirits from feeding on a too meagre quality of rinsings—all these objects under the quiet light of a sky marbled with high clouds would have made a sort of picture which we have all paused over as a "charming bit," touching other sensibilities than those which are stirred by the depression of the agricultural interest, with the sad lack of farming capital, as seen constantly in the newspapers of that time. But these troublesome associations were just now strongly present to Mr. Brooke, and spoiled the scene for him. Mr. Dagley himself made a figure in the landscape, carrying a pitchfork and wearing his milking-hat—a very old beaver flattened in front. His coat and breeches were the best he had, and he would not have been wearing them on this week-day occasion if he had not been to market and returned later than usual, having given himself the rare treat of dining at the public table of the Blue Bull. How he came to fall into this extravagance would perhaps be matter of wonderment to himself on the morrow; but before dinner something in the state of the country, a slight pause in the harvest before the Far Dips were cut, the stories about the new King and the numerous handbills on the walls, had seemed to warrant a little recklessness. It was a maxim about Middlemarch, and regarded as self-evident, that good meat should have good drink, which last Dagley interpreted as plenty of table ale well followed up by rum-and-water. These liquors have so far truth in them that they were not false enough to make poor Dagley seem merry: they only made his discontent less tongue-tied than usual. He had also taken too much in the shape of muddy political talk, a stimulant dangerously disturbing to his farming conservatism, which consisted in holding that whatever is, is bad, and any change is likely to be worse. He was flushed, and his eyes had a decidedly quarrelsome stare as he stood still grasping his pitchfork, while the landlord approached with his easy shuffling walk, one hand in his trouser-pocket and the other swinging round a thin walking-stick.

"Dagley, my good fellow," began Mr. Brooke, conscious that he was going to be very friendly about the boy.

"Oh, ay, I'm a good feller, am I? Thank ye, sir, thank ye," said Dagley, with a loud snarling irony which made Fag the sheep-dog stir from his seat and prick his ears; but seeing Monk enter the yard after some outside loitering, Fag seated himself again in an attitude of observation. "I'm glad to hear I'm a good feller."

Mr. Brooke reflected that it was market-day, and that his worthy tenant had probably been dining, but saw no reason why he should not go on, since he could take the precaution of repeating what he had to say to Mrs. Dagley.

"Your little lad Jacob has been caught killing a leveret, Dagley: I have told Johnson to lock him up in the empty stable an hour or two, just to frighten him, you know. But he will be brought home by-and-by, before night: and you'll just look after him, will you, and give him a reprimand, you know?"

"No, I woon't: I'll be dee'd if I'll leather my boy to please you or anybody else, not if you was twenty landlords istid o' one, and that a bad un."

Dagley's words were loud enough to summon his wife to the back-kitchen door—the only entrance ever used, and one always open except in bad weather—and Mr. Brooke, saying soothingly, "Well, well, I'll speak to your wife—I didn't mean beating, you know," turned to walk to the house. But Dagley, only the more inclined to "have his say" with a gentleman who walked away from him, followed at once, with Fag slouching at his heels and sullenly evading some small and probably charitable advances on the part of Monk.

"How do you do, Mrs. Dagley?" said Mr. Brooke, making some haste. "I came to tell you about your boy: I don't want you to give him the stick, you know." He was careful to speak quite plainly this time.

Overworked Mrs. Dagley—a thin, worn woman, from whose life pleasure had so entirely vanished that she had not even any Sunday clothes which could give her satisfaction in preparing for church—had already had a misunderstanding with her husband since he had come home, and was in low spirits, expecting the worst. But her husband was beforehand in answering.

"No, nor he woon't hev the stick, whether you want it or no," pursued Dagley, throwing out his voice, as if he wanted it to hit hard. "You've got no call to come an' talk about sticks o' these primises, as you woon't give a stick tow'rt mending. Go to Middlemarch to ax for *your* charrickter."

"You'd far better hold your tongue, Dagley," said the wife, "and not kick your own trough over. When a man as is father of a family has been an' spent money at market and made himself the worse for liquor, he's done enough mischief for one day. But I should like to know what my boy's done, sir."

"Niver do you mind what he's done," said Dagley, more fiercely, "it's my business to speak, an' not yourn. An' I wull speak, too. I'll hev my say—supper or no. An' what I say is, as I've lived upo' your ground from my father and grandfather afore me, an' hev dropped our money into't, an' me an' my children might lie an' rot on the ground for top-dressin' as we can't find the money to buy, if the King wasn't to put a stop."

"My good fellow, you're drunk, you know," said Mr. Brooke, confidentially but not judiciously. "Another day, another day," he added, turning as if to go.

But Dagley immediately fronted him, and Fag at his heels growled low, as his master's voice grew louder and more insulting, while Monk also drew close in silent dignified watch. The labourers on the waggon were pausing to listen, and it seemed wiser to be quite passive than to attempt a ridiculous flight pursued by a bawling man.

"I'm no more drunk nor you are, nor so much," said Dagley. "I can carry my liquor, an' I know what I meean. An' I meean as the King 'ull put a stop to't, for them say it as knows it, as there's to be a Rinform, and them landlords as never done the right thing by their tenants 'ull be treated i' that way as they'll hev to scuttle off. An' there's them i' Middlemarch knows what the Rinform is—an' as knows who'll hev to scuttle. Says they, 'I know who *your* landlord is.' An' says I, 'I hope you're the better for knowin' him, I arn't.' Says they, 'He's a close-fisted un.' 'Ay, ay,' says I. 'He's a man for the Rinform,' says they. That's what they says. An' I made out what the Rinform were—an' it were to send you an' your likes a-scuttlin'; an' wi' pretty strong-smellin' things too. An' you may do as you like now, for I'm none afeard on you. An' you'd better let my boy aloan, an' look to yoursen, afore the Rinform has got upo' your back. That's what I'n got to say," concluded Mr. Dagley, striking his fork into the ground with a firmness which proved inconvenient as he tried to draw it up again.

At this last action Monk began to bark loudly, and it was a moment for Mr. Brooke to escape. He walked out of the yard as quickly as he could, in some amazement at the novelty of his situation. He had never been insulted on his own land before, and had been inclined to regard himself as a general favourite (we are all apt to do so, when we think of our own amiability more than of what other people are likely to want of us). When he had quarrelled with Caleb Garth twelve years before he had thought that the tenants would be pleased at the landlord's taking everything into his own hands.

Some who follow the narrative of his experience may wonder at the midnight darkness of Mr. Dagley; but nothing was easier in those times than for an hereditary farmer of his grade to be ignorant, in spite somehow of having a rector in the twin parish who was a gentleman to the backbone, a curate nearer at hand who preached more learnedly than the rector, a landlord who had gone into everything, especially fine art and social improvement, and all the lights of Middlemarch only three miles off. As to the facility with which mortals escape knowledge, try an average acquaintance in the intellectual blaze of London, and consider what that eligible person for a dinner-party would have been if he had learned scant skill in "summing" from the parish-clerk of Tipton, and read a chapter in the Bible with immense difficulty, because such names as Isaiah or Apollos remained unmanageable after twice spelling. Poor Dagley read a few verses sometimes on a Sunday evening, and the world was at least not darker to him than it had been before. Some things he knew thoroughly, namely, the slovenly habits of farming, and the awkwardness of weather, stock and crops, at Freeman's End—so called apparently by way of sarcasm, to imply that a man was free to quit it if he chose, but that there was no earthly "beyond" open to him.

CHAPTER XL

Wise in his daily work was he:
  To fruits of diligence,
And not to faiths or polity,
  He plied his utmost sense.
These perfect in their little parts,
  Whose work is all their prize—
Without them how could laws, or arts,
  Or towered cities rise?

In watching effects, if only of an electric battery, it is often necessary to change our place and examine a particular mixture or group at some distance from the point where the movement we are interested in was set up. The group I am moving towards is at Caleb Garth's breakfast-table in the large parlour where the maps and desk were: father, mother, and five of the children. Mary was just now at home waiting for a situation, while Christy, the boy next to her, was getting cheap learning and cheap fare in Scotland, having to his father's disappointment taken to books instead of that sacred calling "business."

The letters had come—nine costly letters, for which the postman had been paid three and twopence, and Mr. Garth was forgetting his tea and toast while he read his letters and laid them open one above the other, sometimes swaying his head slowly, sometimes screwing up his mouth in inward debate, but not forgetting to cut off a large red seal unbroken, which Letty snatched up like an eager terrier.

The talk among the rest went on unrestrainedly, for nothing disturbed Caleb's absorption except shaking the table when he was writing.

Two letters of the nine had been for Mary. After reading them, she had passed them to her mother, and sat playing with her tea-spoon absently, till with a sudden recollection she returned to her sewing, which she had kept on her lap during breakfast.

"Oh, don't sew, Mary!" said Ben, pulling her arm down. "Make me a peacock with this bread-crumb." He had been kneading a small mass for the purpose.

"No, no, Mischief!" said Mary, good-humouredly, while she pricked his hand lightly with her needle. "Try and mould it yourself: you have seen me do it often enough. I must get this sewing done. It is for Rosamond Vincy: she is to be married next week, and she can't be married without this handkerchief." Mary ended merrily, amused with the last notion.

"Why can't she, Mary?" said Letty, seriously interested in this mystery, and pushing her head so close to her sister that Mary now turned the threatening needle toward Letty's nose.

"Because this is one of a dozen, and without it there would only be eleven," said Mary, with a grave air of explanation, so that Letty sank back with a sense of knowledge.

"Have you made up your mind, my dear," said Mrs. Garth, laying the letters down.

"I shall go to the school at York," said Mary. "I am less unfit to teach in a school than in a family. I like to teach classes best. And, you see, I must teach: there is nothing else to be done."

"Teaching seems to me the most delightful work in the world," said Mrs. Garth, with a touch of rebuke in her tone. "I could understand your objection to it if you had not knowledge enough, Mary, or if you disliked children."

"I suppose we never quite understand why another dislikes what we like, mother," said Mary, rather curtly. "I am not fond of a schoolroom: I like the outside world better. It is a very inconvenient fault of mine."

"It must be very stupid to be always in a girls' school," said Alfred. "Such a set of nincompoops, like Mrs. Ballard's pupils walking two and two."

"And they have no games worth playing at," said Jim. "They can neither throw nor leap. I don't wonder at Mary's not liking it."

"What is that Mary doesn't like, eh?" said the father, looking over his spectacles and pausing before he opened his next letter.

"Being among a lot of nincompoop girls," said Alfred.

"Is it the situation you had heard of, Mary?" said Caleb, gently, looking at his daughter.

"Yes, father: the school at York. I have determined to take it. It is quite the best. Thirty-five pounds a-year, and extra pay for teaching the smallest strummers at the piano."

"Poor child! I wish she could stay at home with us, Susan," said Caleb, looking plaintively at his wife.

"Mary would not be happy without doing her duty," said Mrs. Garth, magisterially, conscious of having done her own.

"It wouldn't make me happy to do such a nasty duty as that," said Alfred—at which Mary and her father laughed silently, but Mrs. Garth said, gravely—

"Do find a fitter word than nasty, my dear Alfred, for everything that you think disagreeable. And suppose that Mary could help you to go to Mr. Hanmer's with the money she gets?"

"That seems to me a great shame. But she's an old brick," said Alfred, rising from his chair, and pulling Mary's head backward to kiss her.

Mary coloured and laughed, but could not conceal that the tears were coming. Caleb, looking on over his spectacles, with the angles of his eyebrows falling, had an expression of mingled delight and sorrow as he returned to the opening of his letter; and even Mrs. Garth, her lips curling with a calm contentment, allowed that inappropriate language to pass without correction, although Ben immediately took it up, and sang, "She's an old brick, old brick, old brick!" to a cantering measure, which he beat out with his fist on Mary's arm.

But Mrs. Garth's eyes were now drawn towards her husband, who was already deep in the letter he was reading. His face had an expression of grave surprise, which alarmed her a little, but he did not like to be questioned while he was reading, and she remained anxiously watching till she saw him suddenly shaken by a little joyous laugh as he turned back to the beginning of the letter, and looking at her above his spectacles, said, in a low tone, "What do you think, Susan?"

She went and stood behind him, putting her hand on his shoulder, while they read the letter together. It was from Sir James Chettam, offering to Mr. Garth the management of the family estates at Freshitt and elsewhere, and adding that Sir James had been requested by Mr. Brooke of Tipton to ascertain whether Mr. Garth would be disposed at the same time to resume the agency of the Tipton property. The Baronet added in very obliging words that he himself was particularly desirous of seeing the Freshitt and Tipton estates under the same management, and he hoped to be able to show that the double agency might be held on terms agreeable to Mr. Garth, whom he would be glad to see at the Hall at twelve o'clock on the following day.

"He writes handsomely, doesn't he, Susan?" said Caleb, turning his eyes upward to his wife, who raised her hand from his shoulder to his ear, while she rested her chin on his head. "Brooke didn't like to ask me himself, I can see," he continued, laughing silently.

"Here is an honour to your father, children," said Mrs. Garth, looking round at the five pair of eyes, all fixed on the parents. "He is asked to take a post again by those who dismissed him long ago. That shows that he did his work well, so that they feel the want of him."

"Like Cincinnatus—hooray!" said Ben, riding on his chair, with a pleasant confidence that discipline was relaxed.

"Will they come to fetch him, mother?" said Letty, thinking of the Mayor and Corporation in their robes.

Mrs. Garth patted Letty's head and smiled, but seeing that her husband was gathering up his letters and likely soon to be out of reach in that sanctuary "business," she pressed his shoulder and said emphatically,

"Now, mind you ask fair pay, Caleb."

"Oh yes," said Caleb, in a deep voice of assent, as if it would be unreasonable to suppose anything else of him. "It'll come to between four and five hundred, the two together." Then with a little start of remembrance he said, "Mary, write and give up that school. Stay and help your mother. I'm as pleased as Punch, now I've thought of that."

No manner could have been less like that of Punch triumphant than Caleb's, but his talents did not lie in finding phrases, though he was very particular about his letter-writing, and regarded his wife as a treasury of correct language.

There was almost an uproar among the children now, and Mary held up the cambric embroidery towards her mother entreatingly, that it might be put out of reach while the boys dragged her into a dance. Mrs. Garth, in placid joy, began to put the cups and plates together, while Caleb pushing his chair from the table, as if he were going to move to the desk, still sat holding his letters in his hand and looking on the ground meditatively, stretching out the fingers of his left hand, according to a mute language of his own. At last he said—

"It's a thousand pities Christy didn't take to business, Susan. I shall want help by-and-by. And Alfred must go off to the engineering—I've made up my mind to that." He fell into meditation and finger-rhetoric again for a little while, and then continued:—"I shall make Brooke have new agreements with the tenants, and I shall draw up a rotation of crops. And I'll lay a wager we can get fine bricks out of the clay at Bott's corner. I must look into that: it would cheapen the repairs. It's a fine bit of work, Susan! A man without a family would be glad to do it for nothing."

"Mind you don't, though," said his wife, lifting up her finger.

"No, no; but it's a fine thing to come to a man when he's seen into the nature of business to have the chance of getting a bit of the country into good fettle, as they say, and putting men into the right way with their farming, and getting a bit of good contriving and solid building done—that those who are living and those who come after will be the better for. I'd sooner have it than a fortune. I hold it the most honourable work that is." Here Caleb laid down his letters, thrust his fingers between the buttons of his waistcoat, and sat upright, but presently proceeded with some awe in his voice and moving his head slowly aside—" It's a great gift of God, Susan."

" That it is, Caleb," said his wife, with answering fervour. " And it will be a blessing to your children to have had a father who did such work : a father whose good work remains though his name may be forgotten." She could not say any more to him then about the pay.

In the evening, when Caleb, rather tired with his day's work, was seated in silence with his pocket-book open on his knee, while Mrs. Garth and Mary were at their sewing, and Letty in a corner was whispering a dialogue with her doll, Mr. Farebrother came up the orchard walk, dividing the bright August lights and shadows with the tufted grass and the apple-tree boughs. We know that he was fond of his parishioners the Garths, and had thought Mary worth mentioning to Lydgate. He used to the full the clergyman's privilege of disregarding the Middlemarch discrimination of ranks, and always told his mother that Mrs. Garth was more of a lady than any matron in the town. Still, you see, he spent his evenings at the Vincys', where the matron, though less of a lady, presided over a well-lit drawing-room and whist. In those days human intercourse was not determined solely by respect. But the Vicar did heartily respect the Garths, and a visit from him was no surprise to that family. Nevertheless he accounted for it even while he was shaking hands, by saying, " I come as an envoy, Mrs. Garth : I have something to say to you and Garth on behalf of Fred Vincy. The fact is, poor fellow," he continued, as he seated himself and looked round with his bright glance at the three who were listening to him, " he has taken me into his confidence."

Mary's heart beat rather quickly : she wondered how far Fred's confidence had gone.

" We haven't seen the lad for months," said Caleb. " I couldn't think what was become of him."

" He has been away on a visit," said the Vicar, " because home was a little too hot for him, and Lydgate told his mother that the poor fellow must not begin to study yet. But yesterday he came and poured himself out to me. I am very glad he did, because I have seen him grow up from a youngster of fourteen, and I am so much at home in the house that the children are like nephews and nieces to me. But it is a difficult case to advise upon. However, he has asked me to come and tell you that he is going away, and that he is so miserable about his debt to you, and his inability to pay, that he can't bear to come himself even to bid you good-bye."

"Tell him it doesn't signify a farthing," said Caleb, waving his hand. "We've had the pinch and have got over it. And now I'm going to be as rich as a Jew."

"Which means," said Mrs. Garth, smiling at the Vicar, "that we are going to have enough to bring up the boys well and to keep Mary at home."

"What is the treasure-trove?" said Mr. Farebrother.

"I'm going to be agent for two estates, Freshitt and Tipton; and perhaps for a pretty little bit of land in Lowick besides: it's all the same family connection, and employment spreads like water if it's once set going. It makes me very happy, Mr. Farebrother"—here Caleb threw back his head a little, and spread his arms on the elbows of his chair—"that I've got an opportunity again with the letting of the land, and carrying out a notion or two with improvements. It's a most uncommonly cramping thing, as I've often told Susan, to sit on horseback and look over the hedges at the wrong thing, and not be able to put your hand to it to make it right. What people do who go into politics I can't think: it drives me almost mad to see mismanagement over only a few hundred acres."

It was seldom that Caleb volunteered so long a speech, but his happiness had the effect of mountain air: his eyes were bright, and the words came without effort.

"I congratulate you heartily, Garth," said the Vicar. "This is the best sort of news I could have had to carry to Fred Vincy, for he dwelt a good deal on the injury he had done you in causing you to part with money—robbing you of it, he said—which you wanted for other purposes. I wish Fred were not such an idle dog; he has some very good points, and his father is a little hard upon him."

"Where is he going?" said Mrs. Garth, rather coldly.

"He means to try again for his degree, and he is going up to study before term. I have advised him to do that. I don't urge him to enter the Church—on the contrary. But if he will go and work so as to pass, that will be some guarantee that he has energy and a will; and he is quite at sea; he doesn't know what else to do. So far he will please his father, and I have promised in the meantime to try and reconcile Vincy to his son's adopting some other line of life. Fred says frankly he is not fit for a clergyman, and I would do anything I could to hinder a man from the fatal step of choosing the wrong profession. He quoted to me what you said, Miss Garth—do you remember it?" (Mr. Farebrother used to say "Mary" instead of "Miss Garth," but it was part of his delicacy to treat her with the more deference because, according to Mrs. Vincy's phrase, she worked for her bread.)

Mary felt uncomfortable, but, determined to take the matter lightly, answered at once, "I have said so many impertinent things to Fred—we are such old playfellows."

"You said, according to him, that he would be one of those ridiculous clergymen who help to make the whole clergy ridiculous. Really, that was so cutting that I felt a little cut myself."

Caleb laughed. "She gets her tongue from you, Susan," he said, with some enjoyment.

"Not its flippancy, father," said Mary, quickly, fearing that her mother would be displeased. "It is rather too bad of Fred to repeat my flippant speeches to Mr. Farebrother."

"It was certainly a hasty speech, my dear," said Mrs. Garth, with whom speaking evil of dignities was a high misdemeanour. "We should not value our Vicar the less because there was a ridiculous curate in the next parish."

"There's something in what she says, though," said Caleb, not disposed to have Mary's sharpness undervalued. "A bad workman of any sort makes his fellows mistrusted. Things hang together," he added, looking on the floor and moving his feet uneasily with a sense that words were scantier than thoughts.

"Clearly," said the Vicar, amused. "By being contemptible we set men's minds to the tune of contempt. I certainly agree with Miss Garth's view of the matter, whether I am condemned by it or not. But as to Fred Vincy, it is only fair he should be excused a little: old Featherstone's delusive behaviour did help to spoil him. There was something quite diabolical in not leaving him a farthing after all. But Fred has the good taste not to dwell on that. And what he cares most about is having offended you, Mrs. Garth; he supposes you will never think well of him again."

"I have been disappointed in Fred," said Mrs. Garth, with decision. "But I shall be ready to think well of him again when he gives me good reason to do so."

At this point Mary went out of the room, taking Letty with her.

"Oh, we must forgive young people when they're sorry," said Caleb, watching Mary close the door. "And as you say, Mr. Farebrother, there was the very devil in that old man. Now Mary's gone out, I must tell you a thing—it's only known to Susan and me, and you'll not tell it again. The old scoundrel wanted Mary to burn one of the wills the very night he died, when she was sitting up with him by herself, and he offered her a sum of money that he had in the box by him if she would do it. But Mary, you understand, could do no such thing—would not be handling his iron chest, and so on. Now, you see, the will he wanted burnt was this last, so that if Mary had done what he wanted, Fred Vincy would have had ten thousand pounds. The old man did turn to him at the last. That touches poor Mary close; she couldn't help it—she was in the right to do what she did, but she feels, as she says, much as if she had knocked down somebody's property and broken it against her will, when she was rightfully defending herself. I feel with her, somehow, and if I could make any amends to the poor lad, instead of bearing him a grudge for the harm he did us, I should be glad to do it. Now, what is your opinion, sir? Susan doesn't agree with me. She says—tell what you say, Susan."

"Mary could not have acted otherwise, even if she had known what would be the effect on Fred," said Mrs. Garth, pausing from her work, and looking at Mr. Farebrother. "And she was quite ignorant of it. It seems to me, a loss which falls on another because we have done right is not to lie upon our conscience."

The Vicar did not answer immediately, and Caleb said, "It's the feeling. The child feels in that way, and I feel with her. You don't mean your horse to tread on a dog when you're backing out of the way; but it goes through you, when it's done."

"I am sure Mrs. Garth would agree with you there," said Mr. Farebrother, who for some reason seemed more inclined to ruminate than to speak. "One could hardly say that the feeling you mention about Fred is wrong—or rather, mistaken—though no man ought to make a claim on such feeling."

"Well, well," said Caleb; "it's a secret. You will not tell Fred."

"Certainly not. But I shall carry the other good news—that you can afford the loss he caused you."

Mr. Farebrother left the house soon after, and seeing Mary in the orchard with Letty, went to say good-bye to her. They made a pretty picture in the western light which brought out the brightness of the apples on the old scant-leaved boughs—Mary in her lavender gingham and black ribbons holding a basket, while Letty in her well-worn nankin picked up the fallen apples. If you want to know more particularly how Mary looked, ten to one you will see a face like hers in the crowded street to-morrow, if you are there on the watch: she will not be among those daughters of Zion who are haughty, and walk with stretched-out necks and wanton eyes, mincing as they go: let all those pass, and fix your eyes on some small plump brownish person of firm but quiet carriage, who looks about her, but does not suppose that anybody is looking at her. If she has a broad face and square brow, well-marked eyebrows and curly dark hair, a certain expression of amusement in her glance which her mouth keeps the secret of, and for the rest features entirely insignificant—take that ordinary but not disagreeable person for a portrait of Mary Garth. If you made her smile, she would show you perfect little teeth; if you made her angry, she would not raise her voice, but would probably say one of the bitterest things you have ever tasted the flavour of; if you did her a kindness, she would never forget it. Mary admired the keen-faced handsome little Vicar in his well-brushed threadbare clothes more than any man she had had the opportunity of knowing. She had never heard him say a foolish thing, though she knew that he did unwise ones; and perhaps foolish sayings were more objectionable to her than any of Mr. Farebrother's unwise doings. At least, it was remarkable that the actual imperfections of the Vicar's clerical character never seemed to call forth the same scorn and dislike which she showed beforehand for the predicted imperfections of the clerical character sustained by Fred Vincy. These irregularities of judgment, I imagine, are found even in riper minds than Mary Garth's: our impartiality is kept for abstract merit and demerit, which none of us ever saw. Will any one guess towards which of those widely different men Mary had the peculiar woman's tenderness?—the one she was most inclined to be severe on, or the contrary?

"Have you any message for your old playfellow, Miss Garth?" said the Vicar, as he took a fragrant apple from the basket which she held towards him, and put it in his pocket. "Something to soften down that harsh judgment? I am going straight to see him."

"No," said Mary, shaking her head, and smiling. "If I were to say that he would not be ridiculous as a clergyman, I must say that he would be something worse than ridiculous. But I am very glad to hear that he is going away to work."

"On the other hand, I am very glad to hear that *you* are not going away to work. My mother, I am sure, will be all the happier if you will come to see her at the vicarage: you know she is fond of having young people to talk to, and she has a great deal to tell about old times. You will really be doing a kindness."

"I should like it very much, if I may," said Mary. "Everything seems too happy for me all at once. I thought it would always be part of my life to long for home, and losing that grievance makes me feel rather empty: I suppose it served instead of sense to fill up my mind?"

"May I go with you, Mary?" whispered Letty—a most inconvenient child, who listened to everything. But she was made exultant by having her chin pinched and her cheek kissed by Mr. Farebrother—an incident which she narrated to her mother and father.

As the Vicar walked to Lowick, any one watching him closely might have seen him twice shrug his shoulders. I think that the rare Englishmen who have this gesture are never of the heavy type—for fear of any lumbering instance to the contrary, I will say, hardly ever; they have usually a fine temperament and much tolerance towards the smaller errors of men (themselves inclusive). The Vicar was holding an inward dialogue in which he told himself that there was probably something more between Fred and Mary Garth than the regard of old playfellows, and replied with a question whether that bit of womanhood were not a great deal too choice for that crude young gentleman. The rejoinder to this was the first shrug. Then he laughed at himself for being likely to have felt jealous, as if he had been a man able to marry, which, added he, it is as clear as any balancesheet that I am not. Whereupon followed the second shrug.

What could two men, so different from each other, see in this "brown patch," as Mary called herself? It was certainly not her plainness that attracted them (and let all plain young ladies be warned against the dangerous encouragement given them by Society to confide in their want of beauty). A human being in this aged nation of ours is a very wonderful whole, the slow creation of long interchanging influences; and charm is a result of two such wholes, the one loving and the one loved.

When Mr. and Mrs. Garth were sitting alone, Caleb said, "Susan, guess what I'm thinking of."

"The rotation of crops," said Mrs. Garth, smiling at him, above her knitting, "or else the backdoors of the Tipton cottages."

"No," said Caleb, gravely; "I am thinking that I could do a great turn for Fred Vincy. Christy's gone, Alfred will be gone soon, and it will be five years before Jim is ready to take to business. I shall want help, and Fred might come in and learn the nature of things and act under me, and it might be the making of him into a useful man, if he gives up being a parson. What do you think?"

"I think, there is hardly anything honest that his family would object to more," said Mrs. Garth, decidedly.

"What care I about their objecting?" said Caleb, with a sturdiness which he was apt to show when he had an opinion. "The lad is of age and must get his bread. He has sense enough and quickness enough; he likes being on the land, and it's my belief that he could learn business well if he gave his mind to it."

"But would he? His father and mother wanted him to be a fine gentleman, and I think he has the same sort of feeling himself. They all think us beneath them. And if the proposal came from you, I am sure Mrs. Vincy would say that we wanted Fred for Mary."

"Life is a poor tale, if it is to be settled by nonsense of that sort," said Caleb, with disgust.

"Yes, but there is a certain pride which is proper, Caleb."

"I call it improper pride to let fools' notions hinder you from doing a good action. There's no sort of work," said Caleb, with fervour, putting out his hand and moving it up and down to mark his emphasis, "that could ever be done well, if you minded what fools say. You must have it inside you that your plan is right, and that plan you must follow."

"I will not oppose any plan you have set your mind on, Caleb," said Mrs. Garth, who was a firm woman, but knew that there were some points on which her mild husband was yet firmer. "Still, it seems to be fixed that Fred is to go back to college: will it not be better to wait and see what he will choose to do after that? It is not easy to keep people against their will. And you are not yet quite sure enough of your own position, or what you will want."

"Well, it may be better to wait a bit. But as to my getting plenty of work for two, I'm pretty sure of that. I've always had my hands full with scattered things, and there's always something fresh turning up. Why, only yesterday—bless me, I don't think I told you!—it was rather odd that two men should have been at me on different sides to do the same bit of valuing. And who do you think they were?" said Caleb, taking a pinch of snuff and holding it up between his fingers, as if it were a part of his exposition. He was fond of a pinch when it occurred to him, but he usually forgot that this indulgence was at his command.

His wife held down her knitting and looked attentive.

"Why, that Rigg, or Rigg Featherstone, was one. But Bulstrode was before him, so I'm going to do it for Bulstrode. Whether it's mortgage or purchase they're going for, I can't tell yet."

"Can that man be going to sell the land just left him—which he has taken the name for?" said Mrs. Garth.

"Deuce knows," said Caleb, who never referred the knowledge of discreditable doings to any higher power than the deuce. "But Bulstrode has long been wanting to get a handsome bit of land under his fingers—that I know. And it's a difficult matter to get, in this part of the country."

Caleb scattered his snuff carefully instead of taking it, and then added, "The ins and outs of things are curious. Here is the land they've been all along expecting for Fred, which it seems the old man never meant to leave him a foot of, but left it to this side-slip of a son that he kept in the dark, and thought of his sticking there and vexing everybody as well as he could have vexed 'em himself if he could have kept alive. I say, it would be curious if it got into Bulstrode's hands after all. The old man hated him, and never would bank with him."

"What reason could the miserable creature have for hating a man whom he had nothing to do with?" said Mrs. Garth.

"Pooh! where's the use of asking for such fellows' reasons? The soul of man," said Caleb, with the deep tone and grave shake of the head which always came when he used this phrase—"the soul of man, when it gets fairly rotten, will bear you all sorts of poisonous toad-stools, and no eye can see whence came the seed thereof."

It was one of Caleb's quaintnesses, that in his difficulty of finding speech for his thought, he caught, as it were, snatches of diction which he associated with various points of view or states of mind; and whenever he had a feeling of awe, he was haunted by a sense of Biblical phraseology, though he could hardly have given a strict quotation.

CHAPTER XLI

"By swaggering could I never thrive,
For the rain it raineth every day."
—*Twelfth Night.*

THE transactions referred to by Caleb Garth, as having gone forward between Mr. Bulstrode and Mr. Joshua Rigg Featherstone concerning the land attached to Stone Court, had occasioned the interchange of a letter or two between these personages.

Who shall tell what may be the effect of writing? If it happens to have been cut in stone, though it lie face downmost for ages on a forsaken beach, or "rest quietly under the drums and tramplings of many conquests," it may end by letting us into the secret of usurpations and other scandals gossiped about long empires ago:—this world being apparently a huge whispering-gallery. Such conditions are often minutely represented in our petty lifetime. As the stone which has been kicked by generations of clowns may come by curious little links of effect under the eyes of a scholar, through whose labours it may at last fix the date of invasions and unlock religions, so a bit of ink and paper which has long been an innocent wrapping or stop-gap may at last be laid open under the one pair of eyes which have knowledge enough to turn it into the opening of a catastrophe. To Uriel watching the progress of planetary history from the Sun, the one result would be just as much of a coincidence as the other.

Having made this rather lofty comparison I am less uneasy in calling attention to the existence of low people by whose interference, however little we may like it, the course of the world is very much determined. It would be well, certainly, if we could help to reduce their number, and something might perhaps be done by not lightly giving occasion to their existence. Socially speaking, Joshua Rigg would have been generally pronounced a superfluity. But those who like Peter Featherstone never had a copy of themselves demanded, are the very last to wait for such a request either in prose or verse. The copy in this case bore more of outside resemblance to the mother, in whose sex frog-features, accompanied with fresh-coloured cheeks and a well-rounded figure, are compatible with much charm for a certain order of admirers. The result is sometimes a frog-faced male, desirable, surely, to no order of intelligent beings. Especially when he is suddenly brought into evidence to frustrate other people's expectations—the very lowest aspect in which a social superfluity can present himself.

But Mr. Rigg Featherstone's low characteristics were all of the sober, water-drinking kind. From the earliest to the latest hour of the day he was always as sleek, neat, and cool as the frog he resembled, and old Peter had secretly chuckled over an offshoot almost more calculating, and far more imperturbable, than himself. I will add that his finger-nails were scrupulously attended to, and that he meant to marry a well-educated young lady (as yet unspecified) whose person was good, and whose connections, in a solid middle-class way, were undeniable. Thus his nails and modesty were comparable to those of most gentlemen; though his ambition had been educated only by the opportunities of a clerk and accountant in the smaller commercial houses of a seaport. He thought the rural Featherstones very simple absurd people, and they in their turn regarded his "bringing up" in a seaport town as an exaggeration of the monstrosity that their brother Peter, and still more Peter's property, should have had such belongings.

The garden and gravel approach, as seen from the two windows of the wainscoated parlour at Stone Court, were never in better trim than now, when Mr. Rigg Featherstone stood, with his hands behind him, looking out on these grounds as their master. But it seemed doubtful whether he looked out for the sake of contemplation or of turning his back to a person who stood in the middle of the room, with his legs considerably apart and his hands in his trouser-pockets: a person in all respects a contrast to the sleek and cool Rigg. He was a man obviously on the way towards sixty, very florid and hairy, with much grey in his bushy whiskers and thick curly hair, a stoutish body which showed to disadvantage the somewhat worn joinings of his clothes, and the air of a swaggerer, who would aim at being noticeable even at a show of fireworks, regarding his own remarks on any other person's performance as likely to be more interesting than the performance itself.

His name was John Raffles, and he sometimes wrote jocosely W.A.G. after his signature, observing when he did so, that he was once taught by Leonard Lamb, of Finsbury, who wrote B.A. after his name, and that he, Raffles, originated the witticism of calling that celebrated principal Ba-Lamb. Such were the appearance and mental flavour of Mr. Raffles, both of which seemed to have a stale odour of travellers' rooms in the commercial hotels of that period.

"Come, now, Josh," he was saying, in a full rumbling tone, "look at it in this light: here is your poor mother going into the vale of years, and you could afford something handsome now to make her comfortable."

"Not while you live. Nothing would make her comfortable while you live," returned Rigg, in his cool high voice. "What I give her, you'll take."

"You bear me a grudge, Josh, that I know. But come, now—as between man and man—without humbug—a little capital might enable me to make a first-rate thing of the shop. The tobacco trade is growing. I should cut my own nose off in not doing the best I could at it. I should stick to it like a flea to a fleece for my own sake. I should always be on the spot. And nothing would make your poor mother so happy. I've pretty well done with my wild oats—turned fifty-five. I want to settle down in my chimney-corner. And if I once buckled to the tobacco trade, I could bring an amount of brains and experience to bear on it that would not be found elsewhere in a hurry. I don't want to be bothering you one time after another, but to get things once for all into the right channel. Consider that, Josh—as between man and man—and with your poor mother to be made easy for her life. I was always fond of the old woman, *by* Jove!"

"Have you done?" said Mr. Rigg, quietly, without looking away from the window.

"Yes, *I've* done," said Raffles, taking hold of his hat, which stood before him on the table, and giving it a sort of oratorical push.

"Then just listen to me. The more you say anything, the less I shall believe it. The more you want me to do a thing, the more reason I shall have for never doing it. Do you think I mean to forget your kicking me when I was a lad, and eating all the best victual away from me and my mother? Do you think I forget your always coming home to sell and pocket everything and going off again leaving us in the lurch? I should be glad to see you whipped at the cart-tail. My mother was a fool to you: she'd no right to give me a father-in-law, and she's been punished for it. She shall have her weekly allowance paid and no more: and that shall be stopped if you dare to come on to these premises again, or to come into this country after me again. The next time you show yourself inside the gates here, you shall be driven off with the dogs and the waggoner's whip."

As Rigg pronounced the last words he turned round and looked at Raffles with his prominent frozen eyes. The contrast was as striking as it could have been eighteen years before, when Rigg was a most unengaging kickable boy, and Raffles was the rather thick-set Adonis of bar-rooms and back-parlours. But the advantage now was on the side of Rigg, and auditors of this conversation might probably have expected that Raffles would retire with the air of a defeated dog. Not at all. He made a grimace which was habitual with him whenever he was "out" in a game; then subsided into a laugh, and drew a brandy-flask from his pocket.

"Come, Josh," he said, in a cajoling tone, "give us a spoonful of brandy, and a sovereign to pay the way back, and I'll go. Honour bright! I'll go like a bullet, *by* Jove!"

"Mind," said Rigg, drawing out a bunch of keys, "if I ever see you again, I shan't speak to you. I don't own you any more than if I saw a crow; and if you want to own me you'll get nothing by it but a character for being what you are—a spiteful, brassy, bullying rogue."

"That's a pity, now, Josh," said Raffles, affecting to scratch his head and wrinkle his brows upwards as if he were nonplussed. "I'm very fond of you; *by* Jove, I am! There's nothing I like better than plaguing you—you're so like your mother; and I must do without it. But the brandy and the sovereign's a bargain."

He jerked forward the flask and Rigg went to a fine old oaken bureau with his keys. But Raffles had reminded himself by his movement with the flask that it had become dangerously loose from its leather covering, and catching sight of a folded paper which had fallen within the fender, he took it up and shoved it under the leather so as to make the glass firm.

By that time Rigg came forward with a brandy-bottle, filled the flask, and handed Raffles a sovereign, neither looking at him nor speaking to him. After locking up the bureau again, he walked to the window and gazed out as impassibly as he had done at the beginning of the interview, while Raffles took a small allowance from the flask, screwed it up, and deposited it in his side-pocket, with provoking slowness, making a grimace at his stepson's back.

"Farewell, Josh—and if for ever!" said Raffles, turning back his head as he opened the door.

Rigg saw him leave the grounds and enter the lane. The grey day had turned to a light drizzling rain, which freshened the hedgerows and the grassy borders of the byroads, and hastened the labourers who were loading the last shocks of corn. Raffles, walking with the uneasy gait of a town loiterer obliged to do a bit of country journeying on foot, looked as incongruous amid this moist rural quiet and industry as if he had been a baboon escaped from a menagerie. But there were none to stare at him except the long-weaned calves, and none to show dislike of his appearance except the little water-rats which rustled away at his approach.

He was fortunate enough when he got on to the highroad to be overtaken by the stage-coach, which carried him to Brassing; and there he took the new-made railway, observing to his fellow-passsengers that he considered it pretty well seasoned now it had done for Huskisson. Mr. Raffles on most occasions kept up the sense of having been educated at an academy, and being able, when he chose, to pass well everywhere; indeed, there was not one of his fellow-men whom he did not feel himself in a position to ridicule and torment, confident of the entertainment which he thus gave to all the rest of the company.

He played this part now with as much spirit as if his journey had been entirely successful, resorting at frequent intervals to his flask. The paper with which he had wedged it was a letter signed *Nicholas Bulstrode*, but Raffles was not likely to disturb it from its present useful position.

CHAPTER XLII

> "How much, methinks, I could despise this man,
> Were I not bound in charity against it!"
> —SHAKESPEARE: *Henry VIII.*

ONE of the professional calls made by Lydgate soon after his return from his wedding-journey was to Lowick Manor, in consequence of a letter which had requested him to fix a time for his visit.

Mr. Casaubon had never put any question concerning the nature of his illness to Lydgate, nor had he even to Dorothea betrayed any anxiety as to how far it might be likely to cut short his labours or his life. On this point, as on all others, he shrank from pity; and if the suspicion of being pitied for anything in his lot surmised or known in spite of himself was embittering, the idea of calling forth a show of compassion by frankly admitting an alarm or a sorrow was necessarily intolerable to him. Every proud mind knows something of this experience, and perhaps it is only to be overcome by a sense of fellowship deep enough to make all efforts at isolation seem mean and petty instead of exalting.

But Mr. Casaubon was now brooding over something through which the question of his health and life haunted his silence with a more harassing importunity even than through the autumnal unripeness of his authorship. It is true that this last might be called his central ambition; but there are some kinds of authorship in which by far the largest result is the uneasy susceptibility accumulated in the consciousness of the author—one knows of the river by a few streaks amid a long-gathered deposit of uncomfortable mud. That was the way with Mr. Casaubon's hard intellectual labours. Their most characteristic result was not the "Key to all Mythologies," but a morbid consciousness that others did not give him the place which he had not demonstrably merited—a perpetual suspicious conjecture that the views entertained of him were not to his advantage—a melancholy absence of passion in his efforts at achievement, and a passionate resistance to the confession that he had achieved nothing.

Thus his intellectual ambition which seemed to others to have absorbed and dried him, was really no security against wounds, least of all against those which came from Dorothea. And he had begun now to frame possibilities for the future which were somehow more embittering to him than anything his mind had dwelt on before.

Against certain facts he was helpless: against Will Ladislaw's existence, his defiant stay in the neighbourhood of Lowick, and his flippant state of mind with regard to the possessor of authentic, well-stamped erudition: against Dorothea's nature, always taking on some new shape of ardent activity, and even in submission and silence covering fervid reasons which it was an irritation to think of: against certain notions and likings which had taken possession of her mind in relation to subjects that he could not possibly discuss with her. There was no denying that Dorothea was as virtuous and lovely a young lady as he could have obtained for a wife; but a young lady turned out to be something more troublesome than he had conceived. She nursed him, she read to him, she anticipated his wants, and was solicitous about his feelings; but there had entered into the husband's mind the certainty that she judged him, and that her wifely devotedness was like a penitential expiation of unbelieving thoughts—was accompanied with a power of comparison by which himself and his doings were seen too luminously as a part of things in general. His discontent passed vapour-like through all her gentle loving manifestations, and clung to that inappreciative world which she had only brought nearer to him.

Poor Mr. Casaubon! This suffering was the harder to bear because it seemed like a betrayal: the young creature who had worshipped him with perfect trust had quickly turned into the critical wife; and early instances of criticism and resentment had made an impression which no tenderness and submission afterwards could remove. To his suspicious interpretation Dorothea's silence now was a suppressed rebellion; a remark from her which he had not in any way anticipated was an assertion of conscious superiority; her gentle answers had an irritating cautiousness in them; and when she acquiesced it was a self-approved effort of forbearance. The tenacity with which he strove to hide this inward drama made it the more vivid for him; as we hear with the more keenness what we wish others not to hear.

Instead of wondering at this result of misery in Mr. Casaubon, I think it quite ordinary. Will not a tiny speck very close to our vision blot out the glory of the world, and leave only a margin by which we see the blot? I know no speck so troublesome as self. And who, if Mr. Casaubon had chosen to expound his discontents—his suspicions that he was not any longer adored without criticism—could have denied that they were founded on good reasons? On the contrary, there was a strong reason to be added, which he had not himself taken explicitly into account—namely, that he was not unmixedly adorable. He suspected this, however, as he suspected other things, without confessing it, and like the rest of us, felt how soothing it would have been to have a companion who would never find it out.

This sore susceptibility in relation to Dorothea was thoroughly prepared before Will Ladislaw had returned to Lowick, and what had occurred since then had brought Mr. Casaubon's power of suspicious construction into exasperated activity. To all the facts which he knew, he added imaginary facts both present and future which became more real to him than those, because they called up a stronger dislike, a more predominating bitterness. Suspicion and jealousy of Will Ladislaw's intentions, suspicion and jealousy of Dorothea's impressions, were constantly at their weaving work. It would be quite unjust to him to suppose that he could have entered into any coarse misinterpretation of Dorothea: his own habits of mind and conduct, quite as much as the open elevation of her nature, saved him from any such mistake. What he was jealous of was her opinion, the sway that might be given to her ardent mind in its judgments, and the future possibilities to which these might lead her. As to Will, though until his last defiant letter he had nothing definite which he would choose formally to allege against him, he felt himself warranted in believing that he was capable of any design which could fascinate a rebellious temper and an undisciplined impulsiveness. He was quite sure that Dorothea was the cause of Will's return from Rome, and his determination to settle in the neighbourhood; and he was penetrating enough to imagine that Dorothea had innocently encouraged this course. It was as clear as possible that she was ready to be attached to Will and to be pliant to his suggestions: they had never had a *tête-à-tête* without her bringing away from it some new troublesome impression, and the last interview that Mr. Casaubon was aware of (Dorothea, on returning from Freshitt Hall, had for the first time been silent about have seen Will) had led to a scene which roused an angrier feeling against them both than he had ever known before. Dorothea's outpouring of her notions about money, in the darkness of the night, had done nothing but bring a mixture of more odious foreboding into her husband's mind.

And there was the shock lately given to his health always sadly present with him. He was certainly much revived; he had recovered all his usual power of work: the illness might have been mere fatigue, and there might still be twenty years of achievement before him, which would justify the thirty years of preparation. That prospect was made the sweeter by a flavour of vengeance against the hasty sneers of Carp & Company; for even when Mr. Casaubon was carrying his taper among the tombs of the past, those modern figures came athwart the dim light, and interrupted his diligent exploration. To convince Carp of his mistake, so that he would have to eat his own words with a good deal of indigestion, would be an agreeable accident of triumphant authorship, which the prospect of living to future ages on earth and to all eternity in heaven could not exclude from contemplation. Since, thus, the prevision of his own unending bliss could not nullify the bitter savours of irritated jealousy and vindictiveness, it is the less surprising that the probability of a transient earthly bliss for other persons, when he himself should have entered into glory, had not a potently sweetening effect. If the truth should be that some undermining disease was at work within him, there might be large opportunity for some people to be the happier when he was gone; and if one of those people should be Will Ladislaw, Mr. Casaubon objected so strongly that it seemed as if the annoyance would make part of his disembodied existence.

This is a very bare and therefore a very incomplete way of putting the case. The human soul moves in many channels, and Mr. Casaubon, we know, had a sense of rectitude and an honourable pride in satisfying the requirements of honour, which compelled him to find other reasons for his conduct than those of jealousy and vindictiveness. The way in which Mr. Casaubon put the case was this:—

"In marrying Dorothea Brooke I had to care for her wellbeing in case of my death. But wellbeing is not to be secured by ample, independent possession of property; on the contrary, occasions might arise in which such possession might expose her to the more danger. She is ready prey to any man who knows how to play adroitly either on her affectionate ardour or her Quixotic enthusiasm; and a man stands by with that very intention in his mind—a man with no other principle than transient caprice, and who has a personal animosity towards me—I am sure of it—an animosity which is fed by the consciousness of his ingratitude, and which he has constantly vented in ridicule of which I am as well assured as if I had heard it. Even if I live I shall not be without uneasiness as to what he may attempt through indirect influence. This man has gained Dorothea's ear: he has fascinated her attention; he has evidently tried to impress her mind with the notion that he has claims beyond anything I have done for him. If I die—and he is waiting here on the watch for that—he will persuade her to marry him. That would be calamity for her and success for him. *She* would not think it calamity: he would make her believe anything; she has a tendency to immoderate attachment which she inwardly reproaches me for not responding to, and already her mind is occupied with his fortunes. He thinks of an easy conquest and of entering into my nest. That I will hinder! Such a marriage would be fatal to Dorothea. Has he ever persisted in anything except from contradiction? In knowledge he has always tried to be showy at small cost. In religion he could be, as long as it suited him, the facile echo of Dorothea's vagaries. When was sciolism ever dissociated from laxity? I utterly distrust his morals, and it is my duty to hinder to the utmost the fulfilment of his designs."

The arrangements made by Mr. Casaubon on his marriage left strong measures open to him, but in ruminating on them his mind inevitably dwelt so much on the probabilities of his own life that the longing to get the nearest possible calculation had at last overcome his proud reticence, and had determined him to ask Lydgate's opinion as to the nature of his illness.

He had mentioned to Dorothea that Lydgate was coming by appointment at half-past three, and in answer to her anxious question, whether he had felt ill, replied,—"No, I merely wish to have his opinion concerning some habitual symptoms. You need not see him, my dear. I shall give orders that he may be sent to me in the Yew-Tree walk, where I shall be taking my usual exercise."

When Lydgate entered the Yew-Tree walk he saw Mr. Casaubon slowly receding with his hands behind him according to his habit, and his head bent forward. It was a lovely afternoon; the leaves from the lofty limes were falling silently across the sombre evergreens, while the lights and shadows slept side by side: there was no sound but the cawing of the rooks, which to the accustomed ear is a lullaby, or that last solemn lullaby, a dirge. Lydgate, conscious of an energetic frame in its prime, felt some compassion when the figure which he was likely soon to overtake turned round, and in advancing towards him showed more markedly than ever the signs of premature age—the student's bent shoulders, the emaciated limbs, and the melancholy lines of the mouth. "Poor fellow," he thought, "some men with his years are like lions; one can tell nothing of their age except that they are full grown."

"Mr. Lydgate," said Mr. Casaubon, with his invariably polite air, "I am exceedingly obliged to you for your punctuality. We will, if you please, carry on our conversation in walking to and fro."

"I hope your wish to see me is not due to the return of unpleasant symptoms," said Lydgate, filling up a pause.

"Not immediately—no. In order to account for that wish I must mention—what it were otherwise needless to refer to—that my life, on all collateral accounts insignificant, derives a possible importance from the incompleteness of labours which have extended through all its best years. In short, I have long had on hand a work which I would fain leave behind me in such a state, at least, that it might be committed to the press by—others. Were I assured that this is the utmost I can reasonably expect, that assurance would be a useful circumscription of my attempts, and a guide in both the positive and negative determination of my course."

Here Mr. Casaubon paused, removed one hand from his back and thrust it between the buttons of his single-breasted coat. To a mind largely instructed in the human destiny hardly anything could be more interesting than the inward conflict implied in his formal measured address, delivered with the usual sing-song and motion of the head. Nay, are there many situations more sublimely tragic than the struggle of the soul with the demand to renounce a work which has been all the significance of its life—a significance which is to vanish as the waters which come and go where no man has need of them? But there was nothing to strike others as sublime about Mr. Casaubon, and Lydgate, who had some contempt at hand for futile scholarship, felt a little amusement mingling with his pity. He was at present too ill acquainted with disaster to enter into the pathos of a lot where everything is below the level of tragedy except the passionate egoism of the sufferer.

"You refer to the possible hindrances from want of health?" he said, wishing to help forward Mr. Casaubon's purpose, which seemed to be clogged by some hesitation.

"I do. You have not implied to me that the symptoms which—I am bound to testify—you watched with scrupulous care, were those of a fatal disease. But were it so, Mr. Lydgate, I should desire to know the truth without reservation, and I appeal to you for an exact statement of your conclusions: I request it as a friendly service. If you can tell me that my life is not threatened by anything else than ordinary casualties, I shall rejoice, on grounds which I have already indicated. If not, knowledge of the truth is even more important to me."

"Then I can no longer hesitate as to my course," said Lydgate; "but the first thing I must impress on you is that my conclusions are doubly uncertain—uncertain not only because of my fallibility, but because diseases of the heart are eminently difficult to found predictions on. In any case, one can hardly increase appreciably the tremendous uncertainty of life."

Mr. Casaubon winced perceptibly, but bowed.

"I believe that you are suffering from what is called fatty degeneration of the heart, a disease which was first divined and explored by Laennec, the man who gave us the stethoscope, not so very many years ago. A good deal of experience—a more lengthened observation—is wanted on the subject. But after what you have said, it is my duty to tell you that death from this disease is often sudden. At the same time, no such result can be predicted. Your condition may be consistent with a tolerably comfortable life for another fifteen years, or even more. I could add no information to this, beyond anatomical or medical details, which would leave expectation at precisely the same point."

Lydgate's instinct was fine enough to tell him that plain speech, quite free from ostentatious caution, would be felt by Mr. Casaubon as a tribute of respect.

"I thank you, Mr. Lydgate," said Mr. Casaubon, after a moment's pause. "One thing more I have still to ask: did you communicate what you have now told me to Mrs. Casaubon?"

"Partly—I mean, as to the possible issues." Lydgate was going to explain why he had told Dorothea, but Mr. Casaubon, with an unmistakable desire to end the conversation, waved his hand slightly, and said again, "I thank you," proceeding to remark on the rare beauty of the day.

Lydgate, certain that his patient wished to be alone, soon left him; and the black figure with hands behind and head bent forward continued to pace the walk where the dark yew-trees gave him a mute companionship in melancholy, and the little shadows of bird or leaf that fleeted across the isles of sunlight, stole along in silence as in the presence of a sorrow. Here was a man who now for the first time found himself looking into the eyes of death—who was passing through one of those rare moments of experience when we feel the truth of a commonplace, which is as different from what we call knowing it, as the vision of waters upon the earth is different from the delirious vision of the water which cannot be had to cool the burning tongue. When the commonplace "We must all die" transforms itself suddenly into the acute consciousness "I must die—and soon," then death grapples us, and his fingers are cruel; afterwards, he may come to fold us in his arms as our mother did, and our last moment of dim earthly discerning may be like the first. To Mr.

Casaubon now, it was as if he suddenly found himself on the dark river-brink and heard the plash of the oncoming oar, not discerning the forms, but expecting the summons. In such an hour the mind does not change its lifelong bias, but carries it onward in imagination to the other side of death, gazing backward—perhaps with the divine calm of beneficence, perhaps with the petty anxieties of self-assertion. What was Mr. Casaubon's bias his acts will give us a clue to. He held himself to be, with some private scholarly reservations, a believing Christian, as to estimates of the present and hopes of the future. But what we strive to gratify, though we may call it a distant hope, is an immediate desire; the future estate for which men drudge up city alleys exists already in their imagination and love. And Mr. Casaubon's immediate desire was not for divine communion and light divested of earthly conditions; his passionate longings, poor man, clung low and mist-like in very shady places.

Dorothea had been aware when Lydgate had ridden away, and she had stepped into the garden, with the impulse to go at once to her husband. But she hesitated, fearing to offend him by obtruding herself; for her ardour, continually repulsed, served, with her intense memory, to heighten her dread, as thwarted energy subsides into a shudder; and she wandered slowly round the nearer clumps of trees until she saw him advancing. Then she went towards him, and might have represented a heaven-sent angel coming with a promise that the short hours remaining should yet be filled with that faithful love which clings the closer to a comprehended grief. His glance in reply to hers was so chill that she felt her timidity increased; yet she turned and passed her hand through his arm.

Mr. Casaubon kept his hands behind him and allowed her pliant arm to cling with difficulty against his rigid arm.

There was something horrible to Dorothea in the sensation which this unresponsive hardness inflicted on her. That is a strong word, but not too strong: it is in these acts called trivialities that the seeds of joy are for ever wasted, until men and women look round with haggard faces at the devastation their own waste has made, and say, the earth bears no harvest of sweetness—calling their denial knowledge. You may ask why, in the name of manliness, Mr. Casaubon should have behaved in that way. Consider that his was a mind which shrank from pity: have you ever watched in such a mind the effect of a suspicion that what is pressing it as a grief may be really a source of contentment, either actual or future, to the being who already offends by pitying? Besides, he knew little of Dorothea's sensations, and had not reflected that on such an occasion as the present they were comparable in strength to his own sensibilities about Carp's criticisms.

Dorothea did not withdraw her arm, but she could not venture to speak. Mr. Casaubon did not say, "I wish to be alone," but he directed his steps in silence towards the house, and as they entered by the glass door on this eastern side, Dorothea withdrew her arm and lingered on the matting, that she might leave her husband quite free. He entered the library and shut himself in, alone with his sorrow.

She went up to her boudoir. The open bow-window let in the serene glory of the afternoon lying in the avenue, where the lime-trees cast long shadows. But Dorothea knew nothing of the scene. She threw herself on a chair, not heeding that she was in the dazzling sun-rays: if there were discomfort in that, how could she tell that it was not part of her inward misery?

She was in the reaction of a rebellious anger stronger than any she had felt since her marriage. Instead of tears there came words:—

"What have I done—what am I—that he should treat me so? He never knows what is in my mind—he never cares. What is the use of anything I do? He wishes he had never married me."

She began to hear herself, and was checked into stillness. Like one who has lost his way and is weary, she sat and saw as in one glance all the paths of her young hope which she should never find again. And just as clearly in the miserable light she saw her own and her husband's solitude—how they walked apart so that she was obliged to survey him. If he had drawn her towards him, she would never have surveyed him—never have said, "Is he worth living for?" but would have felt him simply a part of her own life. Now she said bitterly, "It is his fault, not mine." In the jar of her whole being, Pity was overthrown. Was it her fault that she had believed in him—had believed in his worthiness?—And what, exactly, was he?—She was able enough to estimate him—she who waited on his glances with trembling, and shut her best soul in prison, paying it only hidden visits, that she might be petty enough to please him. In such a crisis as this, some women begin to hate.

The sun was low when Dorothea was thinking that she would not go down again, but would send a message to her husband saying that she was not well and preferred remaining up-stairs.

She had never deliberately allowed her resentment to govern her in this way before, but she believed now that she could not see him again without telling him the truth about her feeling, and she must wait till she could to it without interruption. He might wonder and be hurt at her message. It was good that he should wonder and be hurt. Her anger said, as anger is apt to say, that God was with her—that all heaven, though it were crowded with spirits watching them, must be on her side. She had determined to ring her bell, when there came a rap at the door.

Mr. Casaubon had sent to say that he would have his dinner in the library. He wished to be quite alone this evening, being much occupied.

"I shall not dine, then, Tantripp."

"Oh, madam, let me bring you a little something?"

"No; I am not well. Get everything ready in my dressing-room, but pray do not disturb me again."

Dorothea sat almost motionless in her meditative struggle, while the evening slowly deepened into night. But the struggle changed continually, as that of a man who begins with a movement towards striking and ends with conquering his desire to strike. The energy that would animate a crime is not more than is wanted to inspire a resolved submission, when the noble habit of the soul reasserts itself. That thought with which Dorothea had gone out to meet her husband—her conviction that he had been asking about the possible arrest of all his work, and that the answer must have wrung his heart, could not be long without rising beside the image of him, like a shadowy monitor looking at her anger with sad remonstrance. It cost her a litany of pictured sorrows and of silent cries that she might be the mercy for those sorrows—but the resolved submission did come; and when the house was still, and she knew that it was near the time when Mr. Casaubon habitually went to rest, she opened her door gently and stood outside in the darkness waiting for his coming upstairs with a light in his hand. If he did not come soon she thought that she would go down and even risk incurring another pang. She would never again expect anything else. But she did hear the library door open, and slowly the light advanced up the staircase without noise from the footsteps on the carpet. When her husband stood opposite to her, she saw that his face was more haggard. He started slightly on seeing her, and she looked up at him beseechingly, without speaking.

"Dorothea!" he said, with a gentle surprise in his tone. "Were you waiting for me?"

"Yes, I did not like to disturb you."

"Come, my dear, come. You are young, and need not to extend your life by watching."

When the kind quiet melancholy of that speech fell on Dorothea's ears, she felt something like the thankfulness that might well up in us if we had narrowly escaped hurting a lamed creature. She put her hand into her husband's, and they went along the broad corridor together.

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